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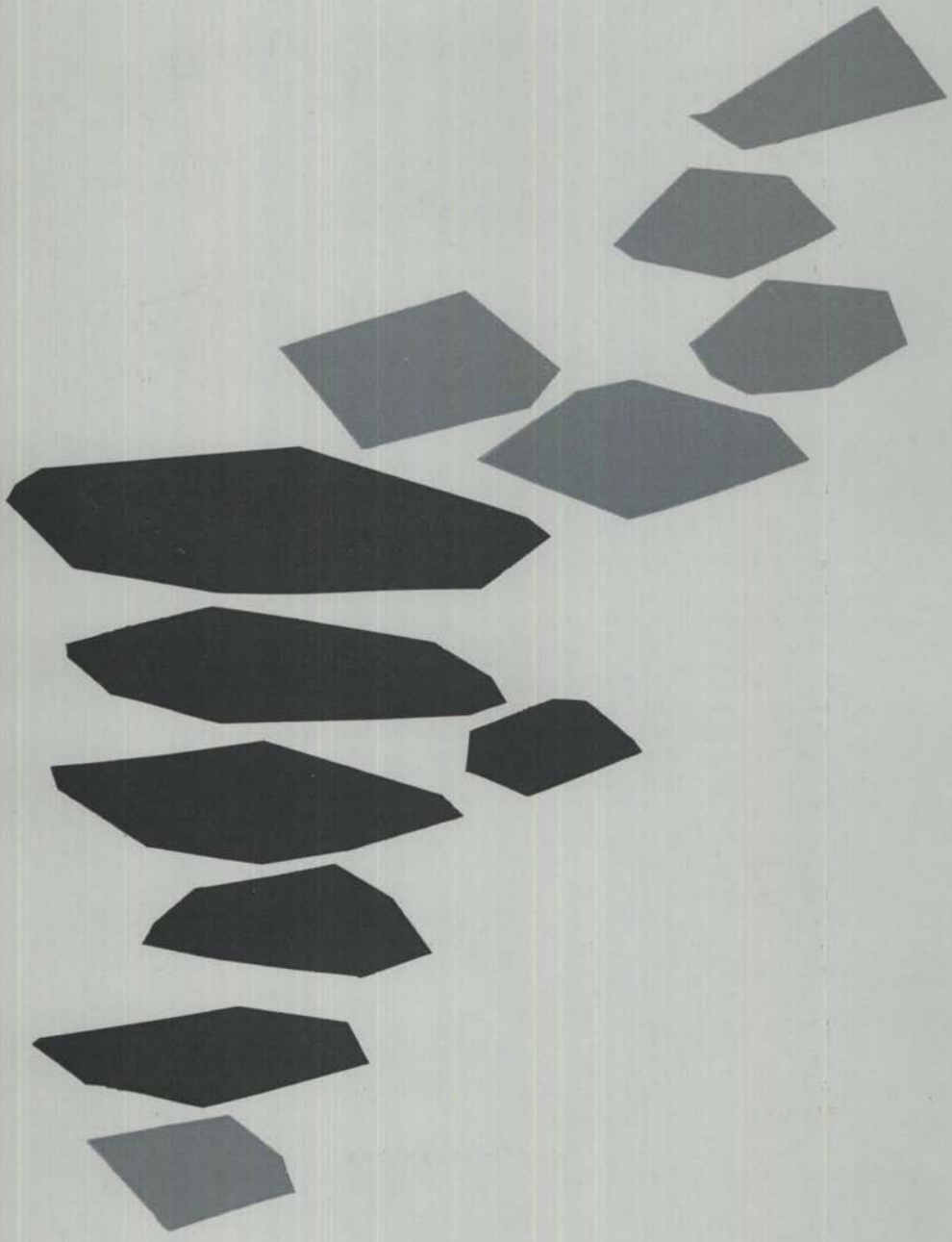

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NOTES

LUCIEN GOLDMANN, the well-known French sociologist and critic, wrote the essay on Marcuse in this issue shortly before he died last fall. . . . **NORMA MEACOCK's** first novel, **Thinking Girl**, will be brought out by Dial this winter. Miss Meacock lives in London and is finishing up her second novel. . . . Bobbs-Merrill has just published **MARK MIRSKY's Proceedings of the Rabble. Down Blue Hill Avenue.** Mr. Mirsky's third novel, will be out soon. . . . **PAUL SMITH** currently lives in London, where, we're told, he's at work on his "big" novel. **Annie** will be out in February 1972 from Dial. . . . **ALISON COLBERT,** who did the conversation with **ALLEN GINSBERG,** is in the Writing Division of Columbia's School of Arts. . . . **RICHARD HOWARD's** fourth book of poems, **Findings,** was put out last year by Atheneum. Mr. Howard has just finished a translation of Roland Barthes' **Critical Essays** (of which **"The Structuralist Activity"** and **"The Diseases of Costume"** appeared in **PR**, No. 1, 1967). . . . **ANDRE GORZ** is on the editorial board of **Les Temps Modernes.** . . . **JACQUES JULLIARD** is a French journalist. . . . **PETER WEISS's Trotsky in Exile** has just been published by Atheneum. He has recently completed a new play, **Holderlin.** . . . **TOM EDWARD's** new book, **Imagination and Power,** is being put out by Oxford this month. . . . **J. M. E. MORAVCSIK** is in the philosophy department at Stanford. . . . The University of California Press is bringing out **CAL BEDIENT's Architects of the Self** this fall. Mr. Bedient teaches at UCLA. . . . **FRANK BIDART** lives in Cambridge. His first book of poems will be out shortly. . . . **ALICIA OSTRIKER's Songs** has been published by Holt. Miss Ostriker is currently editing Penguin's complete poems of William Blake.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following was written some weeks ago, before the wage–price freeze. On proofing it before it went to press, I was struck by the disparity between the kind of questions we're arguing and those pressing issues directly affecting the entire nation — issues that used to be in the domain of political theory but have now been appropriated by politicians.

Here we are still fighting about stalinism and antistalinism, and the old and new left, while questions most intellectuals seem to think aren't elevated enough are left to those who play political games in Washington. One feels particularly frustrated at not being able to do much about the bungling and inequality of the Administration in handling the economic mess it helped to create. We've confined ourselves so long to abstract and moral questions mostly concerning the past or the future — and to those which lend themselves to cocktail party agitation — that we have cut ourselves off from the means of affecting the present. It's as though we have specialized in questions having to do only with minorities.

It seems to me Dennis Wrong's letter in this issue (p. 358) itself does little more than illustrate the low level of argument today. Most of his "points" tend to obscure the issues by reducing them to petty and irrelevant details.[1] Generally, his picture of the New Left and of the

1. Just to get at least some of the record straight, though, before getting to the larger questions — 1.) Maybe I did inflate Wrong's piece by calling it a capsule of New York intellectual life. But, after all, his argument doesn't make any sense except as part of his picture of the intellectual scene. 2.) I assume Wrong's criticism of *PR* for printing Newfield and Hentoff must have had a political meaning, particularly since he describes them as "doyens of swinging radical journalism," and what they wrote was political, though he doesn't say so. Hentoff contributed to a symposium on the new radicalism; Newfield reported on a meeting at Princeton of the Association for Cultural Freedom, which claimed to have cut its CIA ties. 3.) Wrong is disingenuous in citing Muskie and Humphrey as the center to counter my saying that his politics were vague but right of center. The fact is that Muskie and Humphrey are centrists on the national scene, while Wrong is right of center in relation to other intellectuals. (Neither Humphrey nor Muskie, by the way, harps on the sins of the left, but more about this later.)

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new sensibility, and of the reaction of older writers, is vastly oversimplified — as though it all boils down to clear-cut distinctions between moderate and extreme, fashionable and serious, old and new left. There are several knowing remarks about how people on the left feel toward avant-garde writing. But this too is more than a matter of choosing up sides, and I can't make out what Wrong himself thinks about the subject.

Since Wrong resents my characterization of his politics, one would have expected him to spell them out. Unfortunately, his polemical style serves as a means for concealing them. Discrediting my politics still doesn't answer my questions about his.

But what are Wrong's politics? The fact is that the whole tone and emphasis of his *Commentary* article, like his letter here, is critical mainly of the left, from a point of view which isn't clear. There is almost no criticism of the intellectuals who have moved to the right, either on their own or as a reaction to the excesses of the left. Nor does Wrong distinguish among the different brands of radicalism. Hence he gives the impression he is against all of them. There are, of course, as Wrong says, a lot of stylish causes these days but I can't tell whether he thinks there is anything else.

Wrong seems to be more concerned with the campus lunatic fringe, which is really just a nuisance, than with the national assault on liberal values, which he presumably leaves to *Life* and CBS News not only to talk about, but to worry about. It is true that the wilder tactics of the New Left are exploited by the right for its own purposes. But the right won't go away if the left behaves itself. Agnew, for example, has his own ax to grind regardless of what the Weathermen do.

This is why I said Wrong seems to assume that the left is the main threat to this country, by which I mean that Wrong writes as though the left were endangering democratic institutions. Obviously he would be singing a different political tune if he felt that our troubles came from the inequities of the system or the power of business or the politics of the Administration — or if he felt, as I do, that the crazies are a threat not to the country, but to the left itself, because they create confusion about means and ends and hinder the growth of productive opposition. He's picked the wrong enemy, and for the wrong reasons.

The answer to these objections is not to say one is concerned with the politics of intellectuals and not with the state of the nation. This is, of course, the standard rejoinder of those who are taxed with picking on the left while ignoring the right. It is a specious argument, I think, for nobody objects to a criticism of intellectuals or of their influence on public opinion. The question is rather one of political per-

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spective. No one is asking Wrong or anybody else to spout the clichés of dissent in order to prove he's not a reactionary. But one does expect that in terms of the total picture neither the sins nor the influence of the intellectuals be exaggerated, and that an attack on the left, however sharp, be put into the context of American politics as a whole. Otherwise, we get the kind of confusion one can see in Wrong's piece, which fails to distinguish our allies from our opponents. I am reminded of that great contribution to political theory made by the Communists in the thirties, when they took the position that their main enemy consisted of those who were closest to them.

But my real quarrel with Wrong is that he wants to have it both ways. He wants to put down the left, but he doesn't want us to think he is conservative. Hence all the political double-talk.

How else to understand the connection he makes between the excesses of antistalinism in the fifties with the excesses of the New Left today? Taken literally, this is a parochial and a perverse view of history. Surely the growth of the New Left, from its moderate to its ultra-left wing, had more to do with Vietnam and the disillusionment with the system than with "the obsessive anticommunism of intellectuals . . . in the fifties who so muted their left traditions that radicalism virtually disappeared." Besides, if Wrong is so solicitous of the welfare of radicalism, why isn't he more critical of those who assault it obsessively today?

But Wrong's special mode of debate, which permits him to attack the left while dissociating himself from everyone else who does, requires him also to distort what happened in the fifties. There is a difference between antistalinism and anticommunism. It's true that some intellectuals carried their antistalinism too far, turning against all radicalism and becoming generally quite conservative. But others, like myself — even if we weren't always on an even keel — were opposed to stalinism not because of its radicalism but because of its perversion of radical ideals. Hence we were antistalinist, not anti-Marxist or anti-socialist.[2]

I do not want to exaggerate Wrong's contribution to the general confusion. If he were the only one to play these games, it wouldn't matter too much. Unfortunately, they are typical of the way conservative opinions are often couched today in the rhetoric of liberalism. I

2. I should add I don't see what my own past has to do with either the current situation or Wrong's political views, and I mention it only because Wrong brings it up. But I must say his twisting of my position to put a better face on his own is typical of his entire argument.

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suppose this is mainly because in intellectual circles conservatism is still something to be ashamed of. No wonder there are so many socialists who hate radicals, so many liberals who find the left more frightening than the right. This is too bad, for, aside from the question of duplicity, the fear of sounding conservative discourages a perfectly honorable and useful tradition, one that has its own intellectual justification when it is open and secure in its convictions and not just running scared.

W. P.

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Lucien Goldmann

UNDERSTANDING MARCUSE

It is not easy to connect in just a few pages with one of the most complex figures of contemporary thought. And it is even harder when one tries to account for the resounding echo struck by Marcuse's ideas in the thinking of students all over the world — particularly since the relation of the young to Marcuse is based on a misunderstanding.

But let us begin by sketching, if only roughly, Marcuse's place in contemporary philosophy. A disciple of Martin Heidegger, Marcuse's first work, *Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlegung einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit,* in which he traced Heidegger's Hegelian origins, quickly won him an academic reputation. Later he moved toward a Marxism which was at the same time Hegelian and Heideggerian, and published a series of philosophical papers in *Die Gessellschaft,* the theoretical organ of German Social Democracy. His position brought him quite close philosophically to Lukács and Karl Korsch, both of whom were, however, more committed politically and more radical. (Lukács was a communist, and Korsch, at first a communist, later joined the leftist opposition.) Marcuse became the third leading figure in what was called at that time "European Marxism."

Here we must pause for a moment. Heidegger, Hegel, Marx — the juxtaposition of these names seems strange in the light of the philosophical history in the last forty years. It is much less so if one returns to the original texts and to the intellectual climate of the years 1928–32. In fact, existential philosophy had its intellectual origins in Lukács's book *Soul and Forms,* which appeared in 1911;

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and on the basis of this book, a dialogue developed between two thinkers who, although unequal in intellectual force, would each play an important role in the thought of the first half of the twentieth century — George Lukács and Ernst Bloch.

As he moves from the existential, tragic and Kantian position of *Soul and Forms* through the Hegelianism of the *Theory of the Novel* toward the Marxist philosophy of history in *History and Class Consciousness,* Lukács is unshakable in his demand for clarity and rigor, with the criticism that this implies of all forms of false consciousness and ideology. Against this position, Bloch unflaggingly defends human and intellectual values, and especially the creative historical function of a kind of thought which goes beyond the scientific and positivistic — Utopianism. Essentially Bloch is asking whether a hope which conceives itself and is philosophically if not literally founded in a future radically different from the present, a future which men must create by their actions — whether such a hope is negative ideology or positive, false or historically creative. Though a bit schematic, this description gives the essence of the argument which was carried on in a series of works which are particularly important in the history of European thought.

In sum, on the one hand we have Lukács's *Soul and Forms, Theory of the Novel, History and Class Consciousness,* teeming with concrete analyses and totally revaluating philosophy and the social sciences; on the other, Bloch's more poetic and more speculative *Spirit of Utopia,* and the simpler and more popular *Thomas Munser, Theologian of Utopia.* University sociology will be influenced by the two through Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia,* and especially by Lukács, through the first part of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit.* Of course, most academically trained readers read *Sein und Zeit* in a completely different way and didn't see the relation. In fact, it was left to Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* to read in Heidegger things that are not there (the theory of the trans-individual subject and of the team), but which are at the roots of the work, that is to say, in Lukács. And in the same way, at a much deeper level, Marcuse, beginning in 1928, finds Heidegger's Hegelian and Marxist origins (which were in fact mediated through Lukács).

If I remember the *Die Gesellschaft* articles correctly (though I haven't read them for twenty years), there was still an important

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difference between Marcuse and Lukács. Heidegger, developing a dualist philosophy of history, radically separated ontology from the ontic, philosophy from the positivist sciences (and also the authentic from the inauthentic, the elite from the mass, and so on). A monist, faithful in this respect to Hegel and to Marx, Lukács refused any such separations. And, while radically criticizing not only any positivism, any concept of science in the indicative mood, but all metaphysics, all philosophical theory which was conceptually closed and separated from action and from totality, Lukács called for a philosophical science and a scientific philosophy (not even conceiving that one could develop on a purely conceptual level a Marxist ontology of history). And each of these positions was internally coherent and defensible.

Marcuse's articles, however, had a rather curious, and ultimately significant, characteristic: they were written on a conceptual and philosophical level, beyond concrete historical analysis — on the plane where basically any philosophy of the concept, from Plato to Descartes to Kant, is situated. It was a Heideggerian leftover within a system that was no longer Heideggerian, but a leftover which, given the Marxist position he had adopted, led Marcuse's thought back at least in this respect to a more conceptual and more theoretical philosophy, with which Marx and Lukács and Heidegger actually had broken.

The second important phase (1933–41) in Marcuse's evolution is his membership in the "Frankfurt School" to which, basically, he still belongs. At that time, it was made up of the three principal figures who continue to represent it today — Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse; along with Walter Benjamin, who died during the war, and Erich Fromm and Leo Lowenthal, who both later left the group. In France, its principal activity was the publication of a magazine called *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung,* and a book on authority and the family. In the U.S., they put out a theoretical work signed by both Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklarung* (Dialectic and Rationalism), centered on the dialectic between progressive concreteness and the abstractions of classical rationalistic philosophy that lent themselves to oppression.

Marcuse's articles in this period (some of which have just been

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republished), though written in a different style of course — and in any case more clearly — deal with the same problem. Horkheimer and Adorno concentrated on those elements of liberal rationalism which imperceptibly laid the ground for the abrupt shift to totalitarianism in the most advanced industrial countries and for the compliance of the middle class, particularly in Germany; and Marcuse also attempted to show that this acceptance of oppression and exploitation on the part of the middle class is inherent in idealist philosophy. But far more than the other thinkers of the school, Marcuse emphasized the critical character of idealist philosophy, its demand for rationality, for happiness, which despite reactionary distortions is preserved from its heroic period, mainly from the Renaissance. These promises and demands, he suggests, have been adopted by revolutionary ideology, by materialism and by "critical philosophy" — a term by which, given the prudent tone of the magazine, Marcuse means Marxism.

In sum, a difference of accent within a unified school. At the most, one can say that Marcuse ties that negative criticism which will become more and more a characteristic of the Frankfurt School to a demand for radical change, at the risk — which seems to him to be the price of continuing the true philosophic tradition — of placing himself at least partially in the domain of utopian thought.

But suddenly, with Hitler's victory and the development of Stalinism in Russia, passages appear which show a removal from what — as a way of designating certain political and philosophical strains in the radical tradition — has been conventionally called dialectic thought. It was one of the central ideas of dialectical thought, particularly that of Marx and Lukács, that instead of counterposing abstract moral or utopian ideas to reality, one should try to understand their birth within the real world. Against those who attributed to him a moral and normative position, Marx insisted that his program expressed the vision of a genuine social force within capitalist society, the proletariat. And even if (as seems more and more to have been the case) Marx's specific analysis was incorrect, the notion that any valid idea must be the expression of a group consciousness within society, which means *the partial or total identity of the subject and the object of thought,* remained the

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pivot of dialectical thought. Now, we read in Marcuse's "Philosophy and Critical Theory," an article published in 1937:

> But what if the evolution foreseen by Critical Theory doesn't take place, if the forces which should bring about change are repulsed and seem to be beaten? To the extent that the truth of the theory itself is not weakened by the fact, it can be seen in a new light, illuminating new aspects of its subject. Many facets of the theory thus take on a different weight, giving it more distinctly the character of a critical theory. . . .
>
> Like philosophy, critical theory is opposed to any justice which accepts reality as it is, to any complacent positivism; but, contrary to philosophy, it develops its goals only on the basis of the actual tendencies of the social process. Thus it does not fear being reproached as utopian, as ideas of new orders customarily are. If truth is not realizable within the existing social order it will always appear utopian to that order. Such a transcendence doesn't speak against its truth, but for it. For a long time the utopian element has been the only progressive element in philosophy; hence constructs of a better State, of the greatest possible pleasure, of perfect happiness, of eternal peace, etc. . . . The stubbornness born of a partisanship to the defence of truth against all appearances has been replaced today in philosophy by extravagance [*schrullenhaftigkeit*] and unlimited opportunism. Critical theory remains faithful to such stubbornness in so far as it is a real quality of philosophical thought. The current situation displays it even more conspicuously; retreat has come at a moment when economic conditions for the transformation had been realized. . . .

I have quoted this long passage because it indicates clearly the effect of the victory of National Socialism and Stalinism on the evolution of Marcuse's thought (and probably on that of the entire Frankfurt School). The defeat of progressive forces may have rendered official philosophy completely reactionary, but it brought "critical theory" back to Utopia, from a going beyond philosophy to progressive positions within philosophy.

Did Marcuse and the Frankfurt School go over to Ernst Bloch's position? Not completely, because Bloch continued to develop an optimistic utopianism while Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno applied themselves to the criticism of existing social reality and the cultural life, while pointing out the retrograde aspects of the rationalism of earlier periods. Without denying the existence of a connection between Bloch's position and that of the Frankfurt group, one could

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formulate their not inconsiderable differences schematically as the opposition between optimistic utopianism and a critical pessimism, if it is understood that Bloch's utopia implies a critique of the existing as well, and that the realistic criticism of the Frankfurt School involves (and, in Marcuse, always will) the idea of a future society free from oppression and radically different from the present order.

Both positions, however, were opposed to that so-called "dialectical" thought which history had already proven wrong. Only a few partisans of what is now called "institutional marxism" defended that lying and oppressive ideology. There can be no question in that period of the intellectual superiority of the Frankfurt School over the dogmatic mouthings of the orthodox Marxists. The few critical Marxists shut themselves off in historical or aesthetic analyses, or, like Erich Fromm, moved toward "revisionist" psychoanalysis; and the situation was to remain unchanged until the work of several Italian thinkers and the early studies of the self-taught Serge Mallet, among others.

But back to Marcuse, whose *Reason and Revolution, Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* was published in 1941. For a long time, *Reason and Revolution* was considered the representative work of progressive Hegelianism, a sort of counterpoint to the conservative Hegelianism represented by Kojeve's *Introduction to the Study of Hegel,* and by Eric Weil; and I confess that I myself read it then that way. But on reading it today, one can see that it is not truly "dialectical": it uses Hegel and an Hegelian language to return to a Kantian and Fichtean position, brought up to date and radicalized, and in some respects close to Sartre. For, though *Reason and Revolution* may be radical and critical, nowhere does it contain the idea of the identity of subject and object, of reason and reality, fundamental to the belief that the only valid and realizable goals are those discoverable within the real tendencies of the social process. When Hegelian terms appear, they are used to signify a moral, Kantian desire to incarnate the subject in the object and to create a society responsive to the rational aspirations of the individual, or at least to a reason which is at the same time individual and universal.

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Stemming from this, Marcuse is separated from the "dialectical" position at two important points. The absence of an empirical and transcendental subject *within* society as a basis for reason poses the problem of reason's empirical or transcendental character. And just as it did for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalism, the absence of an *internal* progressive force created for Marcuse the problem of an external one. On neither of these two points are Marcuse's texts completely unequivocal. It does seem clear, however, that the need for coherence has forced him to the idea of an individual subject (even to an intelligible or transcendental one) and to the idea of a dictatorship (albeit transitional and pedagogical) of philosophers and wise men. In an article published in 1948, Marcuse criticized *Being and Nothingness* for its confusion between the ontological and the empirical conceptions of the individual subject, without questioning the idea of a subject as such. And in 1965 he added a paragraph subscribing to the views of Sartre, who has become the theoretician of a "radical conversion" and a "morality of liberation."

Similarly, in a 1954 afterword to *Reason and Revolution,* he made the same point: "The Marxist idea of the proletariat as the absolute negation of capitalist society brings together in *one* concept the historical relation between the realization of liberty and its necessary conditions. In a rigorous sense liberation *supposes* liberty; it cannot be realized unless it is the work of free individuals and is carried forward by them — by individuals free of need and free of interests of domination and oppression." He ends with the following lines: "The idea of another form of reason and liberty, such as had been envisioned as much by Idealism as by Dialectical Materialism, again appears utopian; but the triumph of the repressive forces which oppose progress doesn't diminish the truth of this utopia. The total mobilization of society against definitive liberation of the individual, which constitutes the historical content of the present period, shows to what point the possibility of this realization is real."

On the question of the conditions of transformation one idea recurs in Marcuse's writing:

> The frustrations and deflections of the satisfaction demanded by the general will need not necessarily be somber and inhuman, nor

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> need reason necessarily be authoritarian. Nevertheless, the question remains: how can civilization create freedom without being prevented from doing so, given that an absence of freedom has become an element and indeed the nucleus of the psychic apparatus? And if this is not the case, who has the right to establish and impose objective scales of value?
>
> From Plato to Rousseau, the idea of a pedagogic dictatorship exercised by these who are generally thought to have acquired a knowledge of the true good is the only answer. This answer has been forgotten. Since then, knowledge concerning the creation of a humane existence for all men has no longer been limited to a privileged elite, the facts have become too evident, and the individual consciousness would understand them without difficulty if it were not methodically prevented and turned aside from doing so (*Eros and Civilization*).

Though characteristically ambivalent, the passage is coherent. The pedagogical dictatorship is the only honest solution. If it has been forgotten it is not because knowledge is not accessible to all, but because in modern society it is accessible only to rational consciousness and not to empirical consciousness, which is kept from the truth by social repression. The only thing we can count on is the pedagogical dictatorship of the philosophers, even though it is only temporary and transitional.

Thus Marcuse arrives at a position both opposed and related to Heidegger's. Opposed, because Heidegger's reactionary theory of elites reserved the consciousness of Being for the philosopher, the poet and the statesman, who were radically opposed to the inauthentic mass (the study of which is for sociology and positivist psychology) — a theory which was a philosophical justification for a permanent dictatorship of leaders and elites. Marcuse's progressive philosophy, however, maintained the accessibility of liberty and universal knowledge to all men, and opposed the very idea of an elite. Still, there are similarities. For, in contrast to Marx's and Lukács's monism, which brought together in a single concept the relation between freedom and necessity, Marcuse arrived at a radical version of Heidegger's dualism. Marcuse's rested on a sharp but not dialectical opposition between oppression and liberty, the existing and the ideal, the empirical and the rational, the given and the utopian — a duality which despite his democratic spirit forced him to entertain the idea of a dictatorship of the wise.

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The postwar period was one of profound disappointment for humanists and "critical thinkers." For, instead of the new society free of oppression and exploitation which the struggle against fascism had led them to expect, what they saw developing in the West was an extension of the old system in the form of corporate capitalism and consumer society. It is not surprising, therefore, to see that Marcuse and the Frankfurt School have not had to modify their critical attitudes toward existing society; in fact, they have reinforced them, pointing out that there has been a growing gap between the humanistic hopes animating the cultural life of the West and its social realities. (Adorno's work has been most important here, even if one disagrees with him, and has played a constructive role, particularly among German intellectuals and students.)

It is of course true that postwar Western society was essentially different from both pre-World War I liberal society and German fascism; and to maintain a critical position in this period, to refuse to accept a social order in which, in contrast to the earlier liberal era, living standards were rising and, in contrast to fascism, freedom of expression and parliamentary rule were reestablished — in sum, to understand this situation, a new social analysis was required. This Marcuse accomplished in *Eros and Civilization* and *One Dimensional Man,* two complementary works which have profoundly influenced contemporary thought. To summarize briefly, *Eros and Civilization* deals with the relations between society and individual aspirations. Through Freud, Marcuse, like the rest of the Frankfurt School, came to the fundamental conflict between instinctual drives (the libido and the death wish) and social organization, which must repress them in the name of the reality principle. In Freud, the antagonism had an "essential" and ahistorical meaning; Marcuse, as a sociologist and philosopher of culture, gives it an historical dimension, without, however — like Fromm — minimizing the opposition between man's basic desires and social repressiveness.

For Marcuse, the concrete form of the reality principle in contemporary society is the principle of productivity. He goes on to distinguish between the repression which is necessary at any time to maintain a rational society, and the effective repression that supports the oppressive social structure. Thus he arrives at a concept of

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additional repression, which is measured by the difference between necessary and effective repression; and he demonstrates that while the extraordinary productivity of contemporary society has reduced necessary repression to a minimum, the structure of corporate capitalism and consumer society has greatly increased effective repression. Hence additional repression has grown considerably, affecting not only the possibilities of liberation in which Marcuse is primarily interested, but also our understanding of past societies.

One Dimensional Man argues that capitalism and consumer society represent a threat to culture and the development of personality. From Pascal through Kant, Hegel and Marx, dialectical philosophy had defined man by the double dimension of his adaptation and his transcendence of reality, that is, by the real and the possible. And earlier philosophy, based on reason, also had led to the transcendence of reality. Transcendence is rooted in Western culture. But now, as Marcuse demonstrates quite brilliantly, we have for the first time a stratified society which by raising the standard of living and manipulating men's minds makes them more adaptable and reduces the drive toward transcendence. Thus creativity as well as human liberty is threatened by the monster of social planning: we have one-dimensional man, well paid, comfortable, knowing only how to execute other people's decisions, and consume.

One can't overestimate the importance of *Eros and Civilization* and *One Dimensional Man,* the first works to formulate the program of the opposition which, despite Marcuse's pessimism, was *in reality* developing in the advanced industrial societies. Traditional socialist thought spoke mainly in the name of the suffering of the masses, and only incidentally in the name of freedom and equality. By continuing to press economic demands, which corporate capitalism was actually satisfying, the left was beginning to find itself in a false position; it was becoming more dogmatic, more ideological and more artificial. Marcuse's achievement — despite one's disagreements with him — was to formulate the contemporary problem. He was first to account for the growing discontent all over the world. To be sure, it had been voiced in avant-garde literature and in the other arts, but they had been treated with contempt by positivist sociologists, who, like Darrendorf, spoke ironically of "cultural criticism" or the "bohemian–literature–of–St. Germain-des-Pres," until it became evi-

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dent that their own enormous apparatus of analysis and research had missed the fundamental tensions of the society they were designed to study.

To round out this sketch of Marcuse's work, let me mention two more things. I have said that his thought demanded as a transitional factor a force outside consumer society, and that this led him occasionally to refer to the idea of a dictatorship of the philosophers (which perhaps explains the fact that, according to several witnesses, he once in a lecture defended the role of the universities). But Marcuse did relate other forces alienated from the consumer society — the Third World, the American Blacks and the bohemians — to his central idea of the philosophers as the agent of historical change.

As for the controversy between Marcuse and psychoanalytical and Marxist revisionism, let me say again that Adorno and Marcuse had been for a long period on a much higher level, not only than academic sociology and literary criticism, but also than official Marxism. But Fromm's more recent work in psychoanalysis, and that of a few Italian theoreticians and of Serge Mallet in sociology, who abandoned the letter of Freudian and Marxist theories to preserve their spirit, is of a still different order. I am not competent to judge the differences between Marcuse and Fromm. It seems evident, however, that Freud had no idea of forces for the adaptation of the individual to society, or society to the individual. Thus one cannot go along with Marcuse when he lumps together all attempts to adjust the individual to the social system, whether critical or not.

Similarly, one has to question Marcuse's attitude toward what is currently known as Marxist revisionism. There is an essential difference between the accommodation to existing society on the part of a whole sector of thought which still calls itself socialist, and the doctrine of "revolutionary reformism," associated with Serge Mallet and André Gorz. Discarding such outworn ideas as the pauperization of the working class, the proletariat as the universal revolutionary class, the necessity of a political revolution as a condition for any economic transformation and even the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Western societies, the "revolutionary

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reformists" insist on the development of a new working class. But even this term is a concession to the tradition because actually it involves workers in advanced branches of production and a growing number of specialists who might be expected to reject corporate capitalism and demand an economic democracy based on the management of businesses and social institutions. But here, too, Marcuse refused to admit the existence of differences between the two kinds of "revisionism" and lumped them together as ideologies of integration into existing society.

Finally, if one tries to relate Marcuse to the positivist and conservative theories of academic sociology, one sees that just as in his relation to Heidegger, there is both a radical opposition and a certain agreement. Raymond Aron's and Daniel Bell's "end of ideologies" is conservative and apologetic, as is Reisman's theory of the "disappearance of internal radar," despite Reisman's superior mind. As against these optimists, Marcuse has warned us of the one-dimensional man's threat to both culture and liberty, and has pointed to a transcendental reason which condemns consumer society in the name of human dignity and freedom. He saw what was coming where the Arons and the Bells saw only hope. But having said this, it is still true that they all — Aron, Marcuse, Bell, Reisman — share the mistaken belief that Western society has been so stabilized that no serious opposition can be found within it.

In fact, the events of May and June 1968 in France quickly refuted this analysis, and revealed that the transition from monopolistic capitalist society to the corporate capitalist society of the postwar period was much more complex than it appeared to Marcuse. Roughly (these ideas, which I can present here only schematically, will be the subject of a separate study), there were two phases of prewar capitalism: liberal capitalism and the monopolistic capitalism of trusts, what I have called "Crisis Capitalism." In the one, there was partial, liberal regulation of the market and philosophic individualism, rationalism and empiricism. In the other, there was no regulation of the market, social and economic crises and existential philosophy. The *third* phase of Western capitalism — which sociologists have variously labeled consumer society, mass society, technocratic society, corporate capitalism — emerged from the second

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industrial revolution and the mechanisms of economic self-regulation designed to replace the liberal regulation of the market which had been virtually abolished by industrial monopolization. These technical and economic transformations took place within traditional legal and political social relations, which had been modified in a deeply authoritarian and managerial way. And modification without legal and institutional change was possible because it was accepted by a generation, mostly over forty, who felt it satisfied its most important need, the need for greater income and security.

But the realization of those objectives, taken for granted by a new generation, would sooner or later make the authoritarian managerial relations which arose from the exclusive need to augment productivity seem less and less rational. For the richer a society, the more important are culture, liberty and personal authenticity, as against sheer efficiency and production of goods. In addition, a new class, the strata of skilled workers, technicians and specialists, would become dissatisfied with the one-dimensional role of well-paid executors. To make decisions more democratic they will demand that social relations be geared to the new technical and economic structure of society. They will ask for self-management — and a term which before May 1968 was known only to a small number of intellectuals and students, became in a few weeks a slogan of all salaried workers in France. At that point, it became evident that what had appeared to theoreticians as a period of stabilization and equilibrium was only a phase in the adjustment of Western industrial societies to the second industrial revolution, and that it had been superceded.

The concrete forms of these first symptoms of opposition still have to be analyzed, particularly the split, characteristic of all social upheavals that open the way for a new era, between the consciousness and the actual behavior of the actors. And why did these upheavals manifest themselves first among students, and why were they so intense and widespread in France? Again, I cannot go into all this here. But I should mention in passing one process ignored by positivist sociology: the transformation of the function and the nature of the French university.

Liberal society was marked by a duality in social relations: it was authoritarian, almost monarchical in business, and democratic and egalitarian in the market, as well as in the economic, political,

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legal and cultural spheres within the dominant class. Its authoritarian structure, however, extended beyond the factory to other institutions, and, mainly in the middle layers of society, to the family. The independent burgher was head of both factory and family. This meant that in liberal society the transition between childhood and adulthood was difficult: as children, future "directors" had to obey the father (and later, the schoolmaster as well); as adults, they had to be egalitarian, democratic and critical in their relations to their peers. Their adult role was authoritarian only in the sense that it involved the exercise of responsibility and authority, and not that of obedience within their profession or business. To effect the shift, the university, reserved for the sons of the managerial class, was called upon to inculcate the critical spirit and independence of judgment, and to assure the progression from obedience to autonomy, from submissiveness to responsibility and equality. And in order to fulfill these functions, the university had to be largely liberal and critical.

In the transition to postwar corporate capitalism, the extension of managerialism and authoritarianism had an odd effect on society as a whole. The state, virtually separated from the economy during the liberal phase, now became the most important economic agent. In place of the opposition between the authoritarian organization of production and the democratic organization of social and political life characteristic of liberalism, a closer relation between the state and the economy developed, encouraged by the intervention of the state in the economy and the compliance of people whose standard of living had been rising. Hence formal constraints or institutional change were almost superfluous. The natural evolution toward a technocratic society widened the gap between the "technocrats" who make decisions, and the specialists and technicians who execute them.

The old independent burghers have also been gradually replaced by "the new intermediate salaried classes" — what Mallet calls "the new working class" — made up of more or less qualified specialists living at least at the level of the old directors, but no longer having the same status or the same responsibilities. These new specialists are busy executing as well as they can decisions made elsewhere, in which they have no hand. As a result, the struc-

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ture of family life has been affected: these intermediate salaried classes are not prepared by their professional and social life to assume the familial authority of the old independent burghers. This explains in part why the growth of hierarchic and authoritarian social relations in modern society has been accomplished by an increasing liberalization of family life in the intermediate layers of society, and a decline of parental authority, particularly that of the father.

In this situation, the function of the university has been completely reversed. Now it must effect a transition from a liberal family structure to an authoritarian and hierarchical social structure. It must convert young people who are used to a relatively high degree of independence into specialists ready to serve as executors in an economic and social hierarchy. The old critical and liberal university has been slowly and imperceptibly transformed into an authoritarian institution nurturing a mandarin class. The transformation was facilitated by the enormous growth of its student body, made possible by the new affluence, and by the university's Napoleonic structure, which up to this point had been counterbalanced by its function, but which now lent itself admirably to the new demands of technocratic society. Yet the university proved inadequate as a preparation for the new society. For, when each field is too big for one man, and often researchers, assistants and advanced students are superior to their professors, the only way to cope is to replace authority with teamwork among researchers and teachers.

Of course, the transformation of the French university (which to my knowledge has not been noted by the academic sociologists), does not itself account for the student revolt. Many factors were responsible, which I cannot go into here. But it should be remarked that Marcuse, like the other sociologists, must have been surprised by the revolts of the Blacks in the U.S., and the student movements, which he had neither foreseen nor inspired. Nevertheless, these movements, which were mainly cultural and moral and only partly and in certain countries economic, had found their most complete theoretical formulation in his works. As early as 1965, Marcuse declared his sympathies in the famous piece, "Repressive Tolerance," at the conclusion of which he stated that no educator, no intellectual, could justifiably condemn those who took the risks of a violent revolt

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against established oppression. Later, faced with the movements of May and June 1968 in France, he indicated in a lecture at the colloquium of Korcula a turn toward optimism, referring to an essay he was writing to be called "Beyond One-Dimensional Man." But he also emphasized once again the need for a *radical* transformation, and insisted on the danger of being satisfied with partial changes. Ernst Bloch, who was present, immediately hailed Marcuse's support of Bloch's own optimistic utopianism, which Marcuse, with some reservations, confirmed.

Let me end this essay with an anecdote from a discussion which took place in May at a Colloquium organized by UNESCO to celebrate the centenary of the publication of *Das Kapital.* Marcuse had just read a characteristically distinguished paper. Four members of the Colloquium then reproached him for his pessimism and his radical critique: a Communist philosopher explained that all was fine in his party and in the working class; a Soviet economist delivered an apology for the U.S.S.R.; an English participant let it be known that everything was going very well in Red China; finally a professor from the University of Paris sang the praises of Western society.

At that point I asked for the floor to note — and this will be the conclusion of my article — that all these critics of Marcuse proved he was right, since they revealed how well they were integrated into some oppressive and reified part of the contemporary world, while at that very moment, in Paris and in other great cities of Europe and the world, millions of students were demonstrating by their acclaim of Marcuse, and by their own acts, that if his criticism of modern society was often justified, if it had given a theoretical dimension to their movement, he was nevertheless essentially wrong in his pessimism, in his theory of one-dimensional man, and in his belief that there were no forces of revolt and of renewal in consumer society.

(*Translated from the French*)

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STORIES

Norma Meacock

From THINKING GIRL

8

My landlord, at the time of which I speak, was a golden-bearded, early-middle-aged philanderer who'd changed his name from Brombergen to Brombert, earned a considerable salary in advertising, with many perks, and made the most of them. He found me in desolation after Girly had kicked me out in favor of her rosy shopboy. I was wandering up and down the streets of Bloomsbury and round and round them, unseeing and cold — it was winter, too — when Brombergen-Brombert touched my elbow in search of a salacious story and an opportunity for a fuck. On that occasion I denied him both but got a room. A year later, the longevity of men's sexual vanity being as it is, he was still in hopeful pursuit. "Look, Brombergen-Brombert," I'd say, "no dice." "Please call me Maurice," would be his reply.

One evening, chaste for Jockey, I sat at my table writing random thoughts in a sixpenny notebook. B-B tapped at the door and peered round it. "Tragic big deal," he announced glumly, advancing on me. "I'm alone." "Alone?" I raised a brow. "My wife's away," he explained. "I can't get hold of Effie and Titty's working." "Unburden yourself," I said. "Only let me share your bed this night," he pleaded, "and you may arise tomorrow a virgin, for me. I know you love another and prefer to maintain yourself for him. It's merely human, to be honest, female, contiguity I crave. Otherwise I'm a dead duck. I've had night terrors ever since I was a kiddy. I suppose it's an unusual request but if I get into a highly nervous state I shan't be able to carry on with my work and I've got an important client to see in the morning. Look, it's gone midnight and I'm flat on my feet. Have some human sympathy can't you."

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I'd've felt mean, somehow, if I'd turned him away. I had no sword to divide us and could hardly ask him to put on his trousers back to front and thus accoutred come to bed. But he kept his promise to the letter and, saving the last favor, entered merrily for a couple of hours into the spirit of the thing. The words that pass through the female head as the male beside her rubs away for dear life at some insensible fold to the right, left, fore or aft of her clitoris, the sentences, the paragraphs. "You're a passionate woman," he panted. "I knew I could rouse you. Are you coming? Tell me when you're coming darling. That thrills me." (Rubbing furiously.) "You're big as an egg and dripping with juice." Big indeed if I were big as his imagination! I stuck it out, recited to myself what fragments of poetry I knew and then breathed noisily: "I'm coming, uh, uh, uh. Ooooh darling." And he shot his bolt straight into my navel.

I was inert most of the time with distaste. He'd scarcely left the house when I was drawing the teeth of the experience in my sixpenny notebook. And I sent an account so heavily veiled to Jockey that he hadn't the faintest idea what I was talking about.

> My dear dear love [I wrote], I don't mind that there is so little certainty but it can be harrowing to have certainties shifting, to be in the middle of a quicksand. It's not merely that I have illusions (which, I may say, I come through) but that I am quite unable to determine what is illusion and what isn't, to decide whether one can ever know, whether there is a difference, whether it matters.
>
> Once I thought how is it possible for me to blame? How is it possible for me to feel anger? I have practiced this remove.
>
> And now I am filled with revulsion as coiled and powerful as a snake. Inarticulate cries break from me very far within. I feel a simple need for absolution, a consciousness of being soiled, a knowledge that sin, as traditionally defined, exists. And I perceive that there is no absolution unless time itself may be counted.
>
> To rely on the customary view, to say that I am violated, insulted, have known someone dead, is to have an interpretation. But it's an interpretation only of one's emotional response. And yet, not so. No; the interpretation falls down because it does not adequately cover the other participant and

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> the response as a whole. Understanding and compassion are included in that response, were part of the complex of feeling with which I met the experience.
>
> Be sure, my Own One, that in every sense but the temporal I was, from the start, beyond corruption, on the other side. I was isolated and unrelated to a degree that allowed my chastity to cut clean through the horror like a blade. And at this very moment my whole being is all-consuming as the fire that bore the Phoenix to burn into a white flame. I cry from my heart.

With palpitating fingers I posted this explanation and returned to analyze in my notebook the ramifying bearings that this whole episode might possibly have on my relationship with Jockey, the depth of which let no man underestimate. I concluded: "There is one finality, one knowledge known absolutely, one relation that, beyond consciousness on either part, is shaping my responses and has made its claims. Claims is a word too insignificant to show the way in which this is part of my being. Beyond questions of desire, choice, claim, there are existing in me, come from the darkness, modes of response that are part of my whole relationship with him. For this reason alone any simple idea of domination or power on either side is irrelevant. What claims he has, and I know that there are claims, were not made by him but by the fact of the relationship itself."

I closed the book but recurrent waves of nausea throughout the day obliged me to open it again and make something disposable of my harrowing relivings. I decided, finally, that I could not have been deeply touched and asked myself: "Am I not falling victim to the last concepts of man given us which are now outworn and, indeed, known to be wide of the mark?" This seemed so wise and satisfying a conclusion that I copied it out and dispatched it Jockey–ward. After changing the sheets I went to bed perfectly calm.

It was two months before I saw him and could explain what had in fact occurred. Invoking Sartre's name he accused me of bad faith. I said it was more like bad luck but he assured me the case was classic: an inert female experiencing the caresses of a male and convincing herself that nothing is taking place. "There is a sense," I said with dignity, "in which nothing did take place." "Mon semblable, ma soeur," was all his reply.

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I returned to the question in bed the following morning as the sun smote his vermilion cross-hatched neck. "My love," I murmured, and he slewed round like a gold sea-beast. "Mmmm?" he asked. "It would mean embracing fully and with passion whatever experiences chanced to arrive for one." "Or rejecting them altogether," he said. "But sometimes they are quite inescapable," I argued. "Take Brombergen–Brombert as an example. Consider every circumstance, his temperament and my own, the lateness of the hour, the distance of the door, the proximity of the bed, my female weakness, his male strength, and the fact that he is my landlord. I was pulled by hawsers ineluctably toward the very event." "Pah!" he said. "You repel me. When do you begin to be responsible for what you do?" "Why, now," I answered. "Here. With you. In this. I act with my own assent." Such a declaration moved us both. We pressed our warm bellies together and lay in silence. Any reversion to the subject of bad faith would have seemed a noisy intrusion. We rose and dressed. His shirtsleeve was darned. I wished I'd darned it. His underpants were dirty. I wished I could bury my nose in them. I hadn't the rights of a dog and was too inexperienced to reveal my fantasies. I watered the ivy and considered how much I had still to learn.

He was unable to stay a second night and I wasn't likely to see him again for at least a month. He would be deaf to even the direst need. The thought of parting lowered our spirits. I sat on the bed. He leafed through the books. I was silent waiting for something important to say. My mind was a blank. I looked hard at disparate objects: the angle between the chair leg and its shadow, the ellipse, horizontally divided, of grease-stained wall and dado, formed inside a coil of rusty, metal flex leading from gas tap to gas fire. Minutes passed. Urgently I wanted to know if I were free to go to bed with other men. It didn't seem the time to ask. "My love," I ventured, "let me make out a defense for bad faith in certain circumstances." He smiled encouragingly.

"Let me posit," I said, "a woman of great curiosity, with an almost limitless thirst for experience, whose encounters with men however diverse, philosophical, political, literary, et cetera, end always with their putting on the heat in an effort to get her into bed. Because unknown to them — and what business is it of theirs

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since no lasting relationship is in question? — she is deeply in love, she has, so far, resisted their importunings. Unfortunately, as a result, they devote more of their time to securing this favor and being, by now, heartily sick of the business, she has yet another reason for complying. Her best bet is to accede and yet remain detached, to analyze, at these closest possible quarters, her fellow men, their feelings and behavior. She is unable to find joy in the sexual act for its own sake. An English girl in love, she is inhibited by guilt. And as she is an intellectual the idea of abandoning herself without reserve fills her with distaste. Though driven toward the promiscuous bed she would die rather than enjoy it. Such a woman would be wise, I submit, to cultivate bad faith like buggery." He grimaced: "Are you speaking of yourself?" "Why?" I asked. "What would you do if I were?" "Do!" he screeched. "I'd throw you down the stairwell."

He looked at his watch, stuffed books and papers into his holdall, rummaged about for his jacket and we embraced almost perfunctorily running out the door. But as we turned toward the station he stroked each of my fingers, brushing them with his own in a quick nervous manner as if he feared what was to come. I caught the sense of urgency and stared at his solemn face. "Whenever I see you," he began hurriedly, "I am afraid that it must be a great disappointment for two reasons. We both feel these meetings to be so important that there's bound to be something of an anticlimax." And, more quietly, "I'm afraid too that I'm a much duller person than you think, less admirable. This is why I fear always that you are being deceived even if you are an accomplice in your own deception."

The paving stones were dry and warm. Offices and buses carried fiery mullions where beams of light smote them. He'd been preoccupied with himself as he picked over the books, his share in this complicity. I no less. And where he had striven to assess our meetings I had studied the intervals. I shrugged my shoulders. He knew how life was lived. We'd believed that we held each other to all eternity in the heart of being. The joy of our meetings had spilled over into the wastes between them. I was his touchstone and he mine. Out of the fullest realization that my freedom was ever to have I had assented to our love. And now — our absences were marshaling. I smelled them in the sweetness of the streets. For him

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also. The station was dark and cool. He found a seat at the front of the train and we made mouths through the glass window. I supposed I ought to have made him sandwiches. I hoped he wasn't hungry. He begged me to read some improving literature and suggested Jane Austen. I shook my fist. The whistle blew. The train moved out and far, far away. The tears dropped from my eyes onto the floor and I rushed into a Ladies and sat on the lavatory seat thinking of my mother, who had warned me sternly never to do such a thing "now you have hairs on your bee tee em," and positing a woman who really can't say no because she loves it.

13

I was twenty-seven and he was forty-two. When we woke, mornings, the room stank like a fox's den. Even allowing for unwashed bodies, foul breath from our carious teeth, and Klaus's enormous feet hairy and white streaked with shreds of dirt matted by sweat, the odor was strong. "For pungency," I told him, "the stinking blackthorn must play second fiddle to you." We left the windows shut. I nuzzled my nose into his wet armpit and breathed rapturously. He stretched a hand out and picked his grey socks off the fluff-balls under the bed. Their soles were matted to felt. He rolled them up and deployed each lumpy sphere inside his pajama jacket. His factitious bosom pouted invitingly. Then he offered his fat bum, pink and charmingly spotted with moles. I whispered tenderly, "My honey-cake," and he wriggled this delicious pumpkin.

I pressed my cheek against his hairy reins. I licked his coccyx. His face was a smiling moon, a cream-lapping cat. My position was awkward, horizontal, feet pointing east, head west, lower in the bed than he, otherwise the same. I twisted round and licked the cleft. "It tastes like bitter chocolate," I mumbled between his globes. He cried "Bosch!" and jumped up. His socks fell out of his jacket. I relaxed spread-eagled on the candlewick cover while he ranged the bookshelves. In the total history of life, in that vast span, this

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little life is all the life I'll live, I thought. What a pittance. Three score years and ten. My nerves vibrated. And what a chance.

He placed the book between us. "Look there!" he said. We lay on our bellies and contemplated a witch's imp belaboring with a lute the exposed buttocks of a man wedged in a beehive. A flock of birds shot out of his arse-hole. His trousers were rolled tight under his protuberant bum. "Bulging over the top like tomatoes," chuckled Klaus.

"You've cut my dream," I said. "I saw three orbs each representing an anus surrounded by ellipses of tomato pips. Imagine," I hazarded, "a vertical eye, if it's any help. The orbs were gold; the seeds had golden fringes. They were all sharply delineated." "Enough," he said. "I get the message. It's no accident that you recollect such a dream at this moment; you thirst for sex *per anum*. Tomatoes, once, were called love-apples and assumed to share the aphrodisiac properties of cantharides — the notorious Spanish fly."

"Nevertheless," I said, "my dream escapes you; its meaning is its stylization, its totality. I am indifferent to the symbolism of its parts. Your sorts of meanings mean one thing today, another tomorrow, one thing in respect of me and quite another in respect of, for example, Belle. But I want the final, absolute meaning which is to be reached through the organization of the formal elements." "Humph," he said.

He glanced again at the picture, then looked for his trousers, dove-grey stinking corduroys. He stepped into them, pushed them below his hips and waddled toward me. He fell willingly face down on the bed exposing his nacreous rump. I kissed its chilly surface. I attended to it as an object in its singularity. I spread my palms on his buttocks which I prised apart. I wouldn't for the world be hammy. Better always err on the delicate side. Time slid away; my room fell flat as Jericho.

"I'm a whore," he said; "you've just picked me up." I touched the purple skin of his hole the runnels of which disappeared into their source. "Yes," I said. "Say it," he implored. "Say it." "I've just picked you up," I said, "and you're a filthy whore." I licked the edge of the dark nimbus. Sparse black hairs gave off a papery sound as I wet them with my tongue. His fingers were poised,

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open, like Venus's fly-trap. I worked from the outside inward, lightly and quickly. "I'm a tart," he said, "in a one-room, striptease, clip joint." "Yes you are," I said. "What am I?" he implored. "Go on, say it." "You're a dirty tart," I said, "and I'm going to pull your knickers off." I tugged his trousers, then sat back a minute to let the pressure drop. It's largely a matter of timing, I thought.

"What a damp little swamp," I mumbled and prodded the interstice of his orbs with the stub of my finger. He squirmed, delighted. "You won't like this," I said. "But you'll have to lie still and take it. I'm going to shag your arse." "Please don't," he implored. "Shut up. Whore!" I said. I licked my finger to warm it and spat on it to the base. "Please tell me," he implored, "what are you going to do with me? Say it again." Intolerable to enter without lubrication. I spat between his cleft, slid my left hand under his belly to hold his prick and with my right forefinger penetrated his anus; it gripped me tight in a wave of expulsion but I prodded the more firmly, staccato, and it submitted to my thrusts in the end. "Trollop," I muttered in his ear as I stabbed.

When he came over my hand I extracted my finger with difficulty from his sucking arse and held him close. He reached back to grip my hand and lay crooning to himself. Suddenly he turned, guffawed, slapped his thigh, shook my shoulders. "I had a special feeling, a levitation. I'm bathed in radiance. You're a wonderful girl." His eyes shone, he tried to kick out his legs, failed, pulled his pants up, jumped off the bed, ran round the room, laughed, clasped his hands over his head and folded like a jackknife. Then he sat down soberly. "What an experience," he said. "Do you think we're typical or are we a special case? It's like being kicked hard on the bottom," he said.

I examined my silted cuticles. "For all the fantasy," I reflected, "on which he's capable of building his most solid castles, he has a rare eagerness to embrace factual truth, especially that of his sexuality." "You've gone," he accused, "gone from me. You've withdrawn. I always know. The dry light is in your eye." "Why not?" I teased. "All matter is matter for thought, correctly apprehended. And I've had my hoggins." He was cross. "You mustn't say that; it doesn't sound right. Hoggins is man's talk."

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Mark Mirsky

From DOWN BLUE HILL AVENUE

"I'm a Rabbi, not a prophet. But don't take it so hard. Children come back. We were talking about Isaac. You know, Mrs. Blatz, Isaac lived! Believe me. He had a son, Jacob."

Rabbi Lux leaned forward. "Isaac lived. And he had a son, Jacob. A good fellow, maybe you heard of him? He had the same name as your late husband — Jacob."

Mrs. Blatz shook her head. She hadn't heard of the other Jacob. But she wiped some of the tears out of her eyes. "What about this Jacob?" she asked hoarsely.

"God blessed Jacob with a son. Not just one son. But one son especially — Joseph. Just like you, this son Jacob loved with all his heart. An apple this little Yoselle was to him. Jacob was crazy about him . . ."

"Crazy?" said Mrs. Blatz, looking at the Rabbi. "He was crazy, I'm crazy."

"You're not crazy," said Rabbi Lux, interrupting her, his voice rising. "About children everyone is crazy. You have to be, believe me. Jacob was crazy about Joseph. His heart ached with love just to see him. Jacob always had his eye on him. Nothing was too good for Yosselle. He ran out to get him a coat. A coat of many colors he got him. In those days, it was something, a coat of many colors. The best of everything for Yosselle. Just like you ran to do the best for Harvey. And if that's crazy, it's all right!"

"What happened?" asked Mrs. Blatz, beginning to get anxious about this Yosselle.

"Vey," sighed Rabbi Lux. "One day, Jacob let Joseph out of his sight. A growing boy, you can't lock him up. And the next minute, before Jacob knew what was happening, they bring back the coat of many colors. Right away, Jacob recognizes it. A coat like that you don't see every day. But his heart faints as he looks at it. Blood all over it. And the cloth is in shreds. It's a rag. What happened? A beast of the field, a lion or a wolf, something terrible, went and ate Yosselle. Oy! Jacob is sick. He starts to cry. He weeps. He tears his garments. He heaps ashes on his head. He sits

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in his tent, moaning and sick to his stomach. Jacob! Poor Jacob!"

Rabbi Lux swayed in his chair, a hand on his stomach. "He was sick as a dog. I know. Believe me."

Mrs. Blatz shook her head. She knew, she knew.

Rabbi Lux continued. "All day, he sits in the tent weeping. Who can comfort Jacob? He can't keep his food down. He's upset. With the tears in his eyes, he can't see anything. All he can smell are the ashes. He rubbed them in his nostrils. This Jacob was a sufferer, just like you, Mrs. Blatz. He looks for misery. He calls up memories of Yosselle, his little one, just to get sick over them. He weeps over the time he pinched the baby's cheek, the time Yosselle said his first word. Everything he can remember about the boy, he unrolls it and cries over it. Misery — Jacob knows misery. The acid in his system makes him happy. He enjoys his ill health. As long as he's sick, it's all right.

"But how long can you be miserable? Even Jacob. One day he has to look at his hands, wet and dirty with ashes. He slaps his cheek. He shakes his torn clothes. For the first time Jacob realizes, he is a little hungry.

"It happens, Mrs. Blatz. Let it happen to you. You got to live. Would Harvey want you to hate yourself? It's a dishonor to the dead. Take a breath of fresh air. Go to the G & G — have a nush. It's human. Don't hate yourself. For Harvey's sake, let yourself live."

"Mrs. Blatz," said Rabbi Lux, taking his hand off his stomach. "Isaac lived! And Yosselle lived too. All that time, Jacob was weeping, Yosselle was alive. Jacob swore — he'll go down to his grave in mourning. But God smiles. Why? God knows Joseph is alive. Not just alive. Mrs. Blatz, do you know where they find Yosselle? Can you guess?"

"Korea . . . ," said Mrs. Blatz.

"Almost as far. Eretz Mitzraiim. Yosselle is alive in Egypt. He's a bigger man than the Pharaoh. It's a wonderful thing. For thirty years, Jacob has been weeping over Yosselle and now he finds him. And he's not a little boy anymore. He's an adult. He's got a beard, children . . . He's running Egypt. . . . He's a success. Who expected it? Jacob hugs him. Jacob weeps, but this time from happiness. Everyone kisses everyone. The whole family is there. I'm telling you, you never know. . . ."

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Rabbi Lux, who was leaning over the desk, suddenly sees the clock on the opposite wall. Six-thirty! He's half an hour late for supper. Yehoodiss will have a fit! He rises quickly from his seat. "Excuse me, Mrs. Blatz. I got to go! Take heart. Who knows? Maybe we'll hear from Harvey?"

Fatal last words. As Rabbi Lux rushes from the study, Mrs. Blatz calls hoarsely, "It shouldn't take *thirty* years!"

As Rabbi Lux walked hurriedly home along Blue Hill Avenue, he reviewed his conversation with Mrs. Blatz. Something did not sit well. He had started off badly to begin with. That knife of Abraham's, it had stuck in her heart. And what followed was too glib. A cover-up. He hadn't even convinced himself. He sensed he had said the wrong thing. What does the Talmud say? "If a prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that it is accepted, and if not, I know that it is rejected."

Rabbi Lux recalled this passage and knew that his advice to Mrs. Blatz had not been fluent in his mouth. He discerned that he hadn't really comforted the woman. He had just quieted her. Rabbi Lux became uneasy in his stomach. He sensed trouble.

Yehoodiss was standing in the hallway when he got home. At the top of the stairs she stood with an alarm clock in her hands. She let it go off in his face, "Ding ding ding ding! Dang dang dang! Dong! Dong . . . !

She looked angrily into his face and then blanched. He was deadly pale, as white as whitefish. Yehoodiss threw the alarm clock over the bannister and rushing down the stairs, grabbed his arm. "What's the matter?" she cried, frightened.

"An Alka-Seltzer," said Rabbi Lux, faintly. "I'll be all right. I'm a little late. I couldn't help it."

"Never mind, never mind," said Yehoodiss, supporting her husband through the door of their apartment and into the kitchen. She pushed him into a chair by the table. "Sit down, relax. Better late than never!" she said, standing over him, feeling his cool, moist forehead. "We'll fix an Alka-Seltzer. You'll be better."

So Rabbi Lux had an Alka-Seltzer. It took two or three before he was comfortable. Before his wife, who sat opposite him, across the table, gave up staring at his face for signs of a serious illness.

If only a stomachache had been the end. How many woes

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have been thrust down in a stomach? There are even two of them, a big stomach and a little one. Just drop a trouble down into the soft, damp stomach lining. Coat it with a glass of milk. Soothe it with a little Alka-Seltzer. And let it slumber. Half the time when it wakes up, the need for it is gone and you can dispose of anything left, at your ease.

It's so nice and dark down there. A trouble can curl up and sleep forever.

So, Rabbi Lux wished that this trouble would join a few others in his tummy and take a long nap. Maybe it would never wake up. What could he do about it? Nothing! He couldn't even talk with anyone about it. Rabbi Lux was a discreet man. He didn't talk about the troubles he heard. Now an indiscreet one like myself doesn't have this difficulty. I have plenty of safety valves. If I hear of a trouble and it is too big for me to forget, I don't swallow it. I run to tell someone else about it. Not just one person either. I run to ten, fifty. . . . The bigger the trouble, the more friends I share it out to. The more who hear about it, the more that are worrying about it. That's my philosophy, it saves me a lot of worry.

Rabbi Lux couldn't do this. How would it look the most respectable Rabbi in the community running around telling everyone's secrets to everyone else. Not that it doesn't happen. Rabbis are storytellers. The Talmud, bursting gossip, names and all. But Rabbi Lux wouldn't say anything. He couldn't even tell his wife. And this was an additional worry.

Because she didn't like this.

Yehoodiss knew that Rabbi Lux was keeping things from her. She knew they were none of her business. But she didn't like the idea of not knowing what was going on in the Rabbi's mind. Especially when she saw that these things disturbed him. That they made him come home late. That they distracted his attention from her. Yehoodiss wanted to know what was going on. The Rabbi wouldn't tell.

It aggravated her. Yehoodiss loved secrets. They were like sweetmeats to her. She was already a central intelligence agency in Dorchester. What she wouldn't have given for a little firsthand from the Rabbi. She sat every night with a banquet of information and couldn't get a scrap.

Yes, Yehoodiss hungered. Not just for information. She hun-

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gered for the Rabbi, his soul, every bit of him. It wasn't enough that she grasped his plump white body at night in the bed. It wasn't enough that she squeezed him between her heavy thighs and pressed him into her big breasts.

She was jealous of these secrets, these stories that couldn't be told. She watched her kindly but reticent husband out of narrowed eyes and tried to pump him for intelligence. But even in the throes of passion, the Rabbi kept a hold on his tongue. Yehoodiss became a tigress, a minx, a squirrel. No matter how many tricks she pulled in their bed, the Rabbi's mouth remained shut. He sighed and groaned with her, but he said nothing.

And this didn't satisfy Yehoodiss. She wanted to know. She had a right to know. . . .

"What?" the Rabbi would ask.

"Whatever!" Yehoodiss replied.

"Whatever what?"

"Whatever's going on in your mind!"

"Nothing," the Rabbi answered. "Nothing!"

"Over nothing, you fainted on the steps? Over nothing, you tried to drink your soup with a fork? Over nothing, you have been making sounds all evening? *What's this nothing?*"

"Woe if I speak," cried the Rabbi, "and woe if I don't speak." He was in bed by now and he turned over and held his tummy. Yehoodiss knew that a quotation from the Talmud meant the end of the discussion. Disgruntled, she turned over in the bed, the other way, and made angry breathing noises until she fell asleep.

Such a situation is tinder. Yehoodiss's temper was combustible. And the Rabbi was holding so much gas in, it was a wonder he didn't explode. They loved each other. They had feelings for each other. That only made it worse. They thought of each other when they should have thought of themselves. In a fire this can be disastrous.

"Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding!"

Rabbi Lux sat up in his bed with a start.

"Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding!"

Five o'clock in the morning. What was it? A fire — whispered Rabbi Lux. Yehoodiss jumped up in a tangle of blankets and bedclothes.

"Ding ding ding ding dong!"

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"The telephone," cried Mrs. Lux as she tumbled out of bed onto the cold linoleum in bare feet and began to hop, trailing blankets, toward the kitchen. The telephone at five o'clock in the morning? It must be a catastrophe, thought Rabbi Lux. Yehoodiss had other ideas. It must be some piece of information. She bruised her shin on the bureau going out of the bedroom and stubbed her toes on the frame of the kitchen doorway in her haste. At that hour of the morning, it was inevitable that she would slip, collide with the dinette table and falling, smash. A long bleeding cut on her forehead, a black eye, a concussion. . . .

"Ding ding ding ding dong!"

Raising herself off the frosty floor, Yehoodiss snatched the receiver from the phone on the wall, put it to her ear.

"Is Harvey there?"

It was Mrs. Blatz.

"Wrong number!" Yehoodiss shouted and hung up.

Rabbi Lux tiptoed into the kitchen in his underwear. "What happened?" he asked. "You all right? I heard a crash. Vey iz mir! You're bleeding. We better call a doctor." But as Rabbi Lux reached for the receiver.

"Ding ding ding ding dong!"

"The phone," said Rabbi Lux. And then remembering the call a few minutes ago, he asked, "Who was it?" Yehoodiss rose from the chair where she had collapsed and yanked the receiver off the hook. "Who was it?" she shouted into the phone.

"Rabbi Lux?" came the answer.

"How could it be Rabbi Lux who was it?" cried Yehoodiss, exasperated. "Rabbi Lux is right here!"

"Is Harvey there?" asked the voice.

"What should he be doing here?" replied Mrs. Lux. Turning to her husband, she asked sarcastically, "Is Harvey here?"

"Harvey?" The Rabbi repeated the name, bewildered. Then, he clapped his hand to his head. "Wait a second. Maybe. . . ." The Rabbi took the receiver from his wife's hand and spoke into it. "Hello. Is it you Mrs. Blatz?"

It was Mrs. Blatz. She began to talk so rapidly that the Rabbi had a hard time keeping up. "No, Mrs. Blatz. I'm sure. I haven't seen Harvey. No. I haven't heard from him. Yes, as soon as he calls,

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I'll tell you. Yes Mrs. Blatz. As soon as I know, believe me. No. No. I won't tell anyone else first. No one else. You'll be the first to know. Believe me, I'll come right to your house. That's all right. It will be a pleasure. A pleasure. No, I don't need anything. It's very kind of you. I won't forget. The first one. Believe me. As soon as I hear. It's all right. Goodnight. God should take care of you too, Mrs. Blatz. Goodnight. That's right. I won't forget. I'll remind myself. Don't worry. That's all right. It's no trouble. That's right. You can still get some sleep. You'll feel better. Goodnight. Take care too. Goodnight. . . . Goodnight. I won't. Goodnight. . . ."

And so on, for ten minutes When Rabbi Lux finally put down the hook, Yehoodiss was staring at him, angrily twitching her lips. There were a few seconds of silence. Then she blurted out, "So who was it?"

"So who is Mrs. Blatz?" snapped Yehoodiss, compressing her lips. Yehoodiss knew that it was Mrs. Blatz. She knew because the Rabbi had said the name a dozen times already on the telephone. And she knew from her friends in the Sisterhood all about Mrs. Blatz and her troubles. Perhaps Yehoodiss even knew that Mrs. Blatz had been to see the Rabbi. The Sisterhood at Beth Rachmoniss kept an eye on other things besides cakes, in the oven. Yet it would in no way have lessened her irritation. Especially, when Rabbi Lux answered quickly.

"Business from the Schul."

"What's the matter?"

"It's private business, I can't say."

"At five o'clock in the morning, it's private? At five o'clock in my house, on my phone — it's private business? Private? Public? At five o'clock, it's *my* business. What's going on?"

"A poor woman, she lost her son," said Rabbi Lux, appealing to Yehoodiss with open palms to stop the discussion.

"Her son is here?"

"Please, Yehoodiss, forget it."

But Yehoodiss would not forget it. She might have forgotten it. If only Rabbi Lux had opened up his heart and shared some of his troubles. If only he had said to her, "Yehoodiss, the woman is heartbroken. She's half-crazy. The son is lost and. . . . He is probably dead somewhere in Korea. But in her condition now, why tell her

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that. Let her hope, at least for a little while. Her only son. Her one blessing in life. The husband ran away. Her parents are dead and they never spoke to her when they were alive — on account of her husband. Vey! All she had was this boy, Harvey. And he runs away, just like the father. If only he had just run away. But he sends a postcard back. He loves his mother. At a distance. He sends her gifts. Knifes and hand grenades. Now she loves him twice as much. And then he disappears. And they send a form to her — dead or missing. Let her get used to it. Let her think that he's just missing for awhile. Can I tell her that he's dead? Let her avoid it for awhile. Yehoodiss, what can I do? You got to have a little compassion. Rachmoniss . . . pity. Have a little rachmoniss for her."

If only Rabbi Lux had opened to his wife. Aside from some practical results, better digestion, no gas pains, regular movements, who knows what intangible effects it would have had?

But Rabbi Lux was not the man to do that. Rabbi Lux's genius was his composure. It was a gift, however, that could go only one way. Rabbi Lux could give sympathy but he could not take it. A small flaw, a touch, the slightest taint, of pride is in it.

Yet how could Rabbi Lux be proud? His manner was so meek and kindly, almost obsequious. He was charitable, generous, always thinking of others, always trying to understand the world.

Ah yes! He tried to understand the world. Who can understand the world? Did Rabbi Lux ever claim that he could? Well — he never said that he couldn't. What he couldn't understand — he moved away from. He hushed it. He swallowed it. Evil made a stir in his bowels but not in his brains. He sat in the bathroom with a black puppik. But his faith was unclouded. What bothered his stomach never troubled his mind. Life was good. He would find the goodness in a person — no matter how ugly his deeds. Through sympathy, he would lead the poor fellow back to an understanding of goodness, the goodness in himself and in the world around him. Rabbi Lux already had this understanding. For Rabbi Lux to ask for sympathy would have been to admit that he, the Rabbi, did not understand. And this the Rabbi could not do. He had a faith in good — so what did he need sympathy for? For his bowels? On that level, he would accept it.

Rabbi Lux! Man is a grasshopper. Why didn't you read

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Isaiah? You think Isaiah was crying for the Jews? He was crying for himself. He knew — God sits on the edge of the Universe and has a good laugh. You think good is coming? Not any good, you know. Howl — Rabbi Lux! Howl!

"What's the matter?" cried Yehoodiss, coming up to the Rabbi. "What's with Mrs. Blatz."

Plenty was the matter and not just with Mrs. Blatz. But Rabbi Lux said nothing. He backed out of the kitchen, holding a finger to his mouth, going "Shhhh . . . shhhh . . . shhhh. . . ."

Paul Smith

From ANNIE

. . . [W]e were eating supper with Ellen Simms in her room in Galleons Lane. It was a late supper, this last meal that the three of us would ever eat together at Ellen Simms's big kitchen table. And on it on plates in front of us, marble-headed scallions veined with green gleamed on large leaves of fresh salad. Beside them pink slices of cold corned beef lay; and on little plates sucking up to the ones we were eating from, huge cuts of homemade brown bread sat, soaked and lathered under salt butter melting.

Starting in on second helpings and passing the dishes back and forth among ourselves, we were not talking about the subjects we usually thought about with Ellen Simms, and so far no mention at all had been made of the thing that had brought us to her door tonight. Instead there began a strange conversation that was finally to lead Ellen Simms into telling us a story we had never heard before, and neither had anybody else. And it came about in this way:

"I was saying," Annie said, "that nothing is ever what you think it will be. I mean, a person can't get up in the morning and be

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sure that this thing or that thing will happen that day. I mean you couldn't bet your life on a certain thing happening, could you? I don't rightly know how to explain what I mean," she said; and right away she began to try to tell Ellen Simms about the things that had gone wrong for us in the past two weeks.

About Maggie Hyland and the fight with the beggars. About the way I had lost my hat and coat to them. About the stuff lifted from Mick O'Brien's, and about how we had not made a single penny on it. About the work done for Miz Robey and how we had lost to her mother the two pounds Robey had given us, and about the three shillings she had had to insist on her mother giving me. And as she talked she stopped now and then to find the right word to tell of doubts in herself she had not felt before, and to see if Ellen Simms was following her.

"For instance," she said, looking straight at Ellen Simms, "I used to think till you told me otherwise that everything was the same all over. I used to think that every country in the world was the same, with the same food, the same money, and the same people. But it isn't like that at all, is it? In fact, if I'm to believe you and them books up there on them shelves, nothing at all is the way I imagined it was. Every country is different and every single person in that country is different. In the same way you, me, and Tucker is different. Understand?" She paused and looked at me, and then at Ellen Simms, who gave her a long uncomprehending stare.

"Okay, then, *I'll* tell you what I mean," she said. "For instance, I know you're a dealer — right. But if some stranger was to come through that door right now and we were to ask him to tell us what you were, I bet he wouldn't be able to. At least, not just by looking. Because indoors and without your shawl you don't look like a dealer. And neither do you act like one. In the first place every other dealer that I know keeps what they don't sell on a Saturday night under their beds till Monday morning. Then if it's cabbage or anything perishable, all they do is tear off the withered leaves and give what's left a quick hose-down under the pipe, then set it back up for sale again. But you never do. You never keep anything under your bed, or in the house overnight, and if you are left with stuff on your hands, either you sell it cheap or give it away for nothing. Also you can read and write. And you're neat always and you never go on the drink the way most of them do.

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"And then of course there's this room and that crib," Annie said, and pausing, her glance flew to a cabinet set between two windows on which the nativity scene was set out. "Well, nobody lives with bare whitewashed walls and nobody expects to come across a crib right in the middle of the month of August," she said, and her glance, straying back again to the crib, went over the little figures carved in wood and brightly painted: Jesus in his straw–lined crib, Mary, Joseph, the Ox, the Ass, the Wise Men, the Shepherds, and the Angel. And behind them larger angels holding up crowns of red candles and with flowers in their yellow hair. "Not that I've anything against bare walls or a crib in August," Annie said. "It's just that it's unexpected. It's just that I don't know anyone else who lives without a picture of some sort on the wall, and I've certainly never known anybody who left a crib out from one year's end to the other. Tucker's mother doesn't," she said; and under her bitter black brows, Ellen Simms's caverned brown eyes glittered smoky. "I'm not criticizing," Annie said, "it's just that it's unexpected, and somehow I never allow for the unexpected or take it into account."

She paused and leaned both elbows on the table, and I waited for Ellen Simms to tell her to remove them the way she sometimes did; but she didn't. Instead she pushed away her plate and, easing back on her chair, reached into the pocket of the blue cotton apron she wore indoors and took out a clay pipe, a box of matches, and a brown tobacco pouch, and set them out on the table in front of her. In her fifties, Ellen Simms was still youthful looking, with her slim hard body and her general appearance still handsome. Her hair, drawn back into a low thick bun on the nape of her neck, was still jet black and her well-molded lips set in a firm skin, brownish white. Never beautiful, she nevertheless gave an impression of beauty. A hard dark violent beauty, opaque as stone and almost as inhuman. Like a dead tree on a lonely road she was, I was thinking, when Annie, looking at me, said suddenly: "Unexpected, isn't it?"

"What is?" I asked.

"Seeing a crib in August."

I nodded agreement and thought about my mother, who like Ellen Simms also took care of things, but who instead of leaving

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our crib out all year round brought ours out only at Christmas so that the pleasure was always new.

And she had other rituals too; and as Annie picked up a scallion and bit into the head, I remembered the drink my mother made from hops every June, and the head and face she carved out of a turnip at Halloween, and the paper chains she made and garlanded the ceiling with on Christmas Eve. Also, unlike Ellen Simms who lived and liked living with bare walls with the bricks showing, my mother fresh-papered the walls and whitewashed the ceilings of our two rooms every spring, and it was from things like this that the year for me gained shape and the rhythm I wanted my life to have.

"Of course, it's not taking the unexpected into account that's my trouble," Annie said; and she watched Ellen Simms twist off a ragged fringe of tobacco from the blackened bowl of her pipe, and then, with her left hand which had been stiffened by a winter rheumatism, stuff it back down again. "I mean," Annie said, "it's like when I come here and see that crib. I know I'll see it, but just the same, every time I do I get a shock. It's like that pack of beggars stripping Tucker of that hat and coat," she said, as Ellen Simms struck a match, and without shifting her somber gaze off Annie, held the match close over the bowl of her pipe and sucked. "Now that was unexpected and had never happened to us before," Annie said into the blue spiral of smoke that rose and hung in folding and unfolding layers over us and the table. "And for God's sake who'd've thought there was one among that pack with the courage to do such a thing?" she asked, and looking through the smoke at Ellen Simms, added, "And it was unexpected the way you said nothing about it.

"I was sure you'd give us a hard time over that, and so was Tucker. He even thought you might change your mind about giving us your cart on account of it." Annie paused, and I glanced at Ellen Simms and tried to read her, but she remained impassive, thoughtfully silent.

"Then last night," Annie said, "my Ma grabbing that money from us before my hand could even feel the strength of it. What I'm really trying to say is I just never allowed for none of them things taking place when I threw up the milk route and talked Tucker into quitting Mr. Cribbins. Even though I know that man

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was a robber an all. I thought everything would go as I planned. With us doing the bens and making all we could on the sale of the cinders. After all, I was only asking for things to stay the way they always had till you quit dealing and until we began. But now . . ." Her voice broke and she looked up at the ceiling.

"But now?" Ellen Simms asked, and into the pause that came she sat up straight on her chair and her lips and square white teeth clamped down hard on the stem of the pipe in her mouth. Annie shook her head, and I guessed that with her now it was more a matter of feelings than of facts or words she was finding it difficult to explain.

"I feel bunched," she said finally. And the sounds in the room and outside in the lane were mingled, and in the summer evening long drawn. Her glance roped in me and Ellen Simms and the room. "I feel suddenly bet," she said. "Like I've lost the full use of my head or something. I mean . . ." She started again, but Ellen Simms cut her short.

"I know what you mean," she said. "But you can't afford to feel bunched or bet."

"Maybe not, but I do just the same, with the way things have been going," Annie said. "I'm sick at the very sameness of the days because lately every single day is filled with downright bad luck or with things just going contrary. And yet," she added and paused, "at the same time everything is changing, if you know what I mean."

"I know what you mean," Ellen Simms said, and the smoke from her pipe was beginning to lie bitter and warm and stagnant in the room. "I also know there's just no such thing as sameness," she said. "It just looks that way sometimes."

"How do you mean?" Annie asked.

"What I say," Ellen Simms said. "Maybe we do the same things every day and even go back over the same ground. And perhaps we may even have the same contentious, vexing, and sad-making thoughts, but inside where you can't see them, things are changing all the time — working themselves up into a state where they all come together like peas in a pod and finally show. Then before you know where you are you're saying something's happened and your life is so different you can't believe it's your own."

"Yes, that's it," Annie said when Ellen Simms paused and let her hand with the pipe in it rest on the edge of the table. "One day

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everything is in full control," she said. "You know or think you do, where it is you're going, and why, and what it is you'll see when you get there. Then without as much as a by-your-leave, everything you had all neatly tied up is gone and you're left staring at Jesus only knows what. Only it's never at what you know or are used to, or want, and right away you're stranded in a misery that was none of your making. Or you think it wasn't. But that's only because you haven't been aware of the changes taking place inside yourself. So when something does happen, the old you is gone, and what's left can't handle or cope with the event. So you feel bunched. Bet. But we wouldn't feel either if we had been aware of the changes going on in the first place, and in spite of them held something of the old self in reserve. It's only when we forget and let go the thing from which we draw our strength that we leave ourselves defenseless."

"That's when the hard knocks come. The ones that do the real damage. And they come always from where we least expect them. It was like that with me," Ellen Simms said and, pausing, looked over in silence through the darkening room to the windows and the coarse white lace curtains that had been pushed aside — to the cabinet between the windows and the nativity scene; and from that she looked to her bed in the corner, with its polar white fringed quilt against the bare whitewashed wall, and over it and running the length of it the four unpainted shelves she had put up herself to hold her books. "Thirty years ago," she said suddenly: and now, sharp, suspicious, watchful, imperious, and implacable, *she was a dealer* and looked the way she did in the street as she began the story we had never heard before. The story of herself and Andy Prince.

"I was twenty-three," she said. "I had a hard-scrubbed face and chopped hair. My mother was dead. Died when I was a child. I lived in a lane like yours. Along with thirty-six other families. There was a pump in the middle of the lane and behind it three lavatories for one hundred and sixty people. We had rats in the houses and strife that grew out of the walls of them. I lived with my father and his bothered widowed sister. She had teeth like cloves and black hair she could sit on. But she wore it looped over ears pierced for rings that dropped in heavy solid gold to her shoulders.

"She suffered from chronic indigestion and a voice that complained. Often. And always about me to my father. In his bare feet that man stood seven foot high. He wore boots. Heavy hobnailers.

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He owned a horse fit only for the knackers and a dray. Worked building sites and neither smoke nor drank. I looked after the two rooms we had because my aunt was never well enough to do more than the rosary. I also took care of the horse. Harnessing him up in the morning and unharnessing him again at night. I fed and watered him and cleaned his stable. And in between I was kicked. It's almost all I can remember about my father. I've tried hard since, but I can never remember that man giving me as much as a passing nod of approval. All I remember is the kicks. He used to place the toecap of his right boot in the small of my back. Never anywhere else; and never once did he miss.

"His aim was always accurate. Should've been a footballer that man. But you grow tired of pain. I did, and one day I left and went where I wanted to be. To a room on my own in a house over on the north strand. For the first time in my life I felt human. And I was happy. And knew it. That was the thing about it. I was happy and I knew it. Most of us don't, you know, even when we are; but I did. I had a job — a good one in a shop in Grafton Street. Dealt in sweets, cigarettes, birthday cards, and fruit out of season. I was there two years. Then, just before the Christmas of the second, I was in O'Connell Street one afternoon waiting to cross and looking at the lights and the people crowding in and out of the shops through flurries of snow.

"It was about four. Dark enough for caution. And I was waiting to cross the street. Waiting for a crowd of soldiers on horses to pass. Lovely animals creating an uproar you could hear a mile away. Like drums the hooves of them horses were. Drums beating deep . . . and frisky, a lot of them. Sauntering past demons, shying at shadows. A few acting flash. Tossing metal. It was the horses I was watching when I was asked my name. By a soldier on one of them, bent over. I didn't answer at all, for I could see the man asking was the kind who'd never have to struggle through the alphabet to answer a short letter. Besides I wasn't the kind, my aunt used to say. I never would be. And between her and my father, I wasn't. I will tell you the truth, my aunt used to say; and she did. The result was that at twenty-three I couldn't say the things men wanted to hear. I couldn't lie, or flatter either a man's vanity or his strength."

Ellen Simms paused abruptly and her glance, brooding in the trough of the sudden silence, excluded me and fell on Annie and

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stayed, as if she wanted to communicate to her alone, something other than the story she was telling. I watched her dark face struggle to open, and then saw it close again as she withdrew whatever it was she had been about to offer. "Anyway," she said, breaking the silence while I continued to stare at the dark square of face before us, "when I saw the fair looks of the fella asking I knew things must always be easy for him. And I thought, why should they be. Sometimes, I thought to myself, they should be different, even for him.

"So, composing myself to resist, I heard him asking again, and let him ask till the horse he was on gave up fighting the reins — quivered like St. Vitus and came close, drenching me and all about me in a stream of sweat. 'I'll not stir till you tell me,' the fella on it said, and bent down toward me over the pommel. So I told him, blazing my own impudence up at the blue eyes, just as the horse under him began to prance.

" 'I'll see you so,' he said then; and he said when, and he said where, and cantered off. I watched him, and now he'd gone I could with calm eyes. Because for a minute, and while he was beside me, I'd been put off course. And . . ." Annie's prompt broke into the pause that ticked with the alarm clock between the china twin dogs on the mantelpiece.

"Did you?" Annie asked, and added, "turn up, I mean."

Ellen Simms nodded. "I did. But awkwardly, and needing help," she said. "In the main door of the General Post Office the following night. He was the first person I'd ever known who couldn't look at me enough. I could feel the blast of that fella's eyes on me the whole night. It was strange, because my father's eyes used to stream off into long and lonely distances at the sight of me. But Andy Prince's eyes stayed.

"We were married before Christmas. The week before. That crib was the first thing he ever gave me. Bought it off a dealer's stall in Moore Street."

"I never knew you'd been married," Annie said when Ellen Simms stopped speaking, and it seemed as if she had forgotten us or was not going to tell us more.

"For five years. For five years," Ellen Simms said with unshakable certainty. And then began the story of those years. Of her and Andy Prince. And the story went from that first meeting in the

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snow in O'Connell Street to the sitdown supper for thirty invited relatives and guests that Andy Prince's brother gave for them on the family's farm in Limerick. And then to the wedding at the church in Aungier Street. The honeymoon in the west in a cottage on a stretch of the coast between Galway and Roundstone.

Then Dublin again and the house beside the Phoenix Park near the barracks where Andy Prince was stationed. And the days then merging one into another, and the weeks, the months, the years together. To the fifth and leaves turning, and the trees and the grass in the park where they sometimes walked, smoky and autumn gray and gold. And the baby begun. Big with the future she bought a dress. A proud red dress. The waiting then, and the knitting, the sewing; and in between Ellen Simms taking good care of Andy Prince — pressing his uniform and cleaning with Brasso the brass buttons on it — and cleaning the boots with polish and the ox-blood colored leggings that were best done with milk.

Through the darkness of the ember days to flowers, yellow, wind-tossed under the sometimes drained sky, and the baby pink of the flowering cherry. The new spring, and inside her the baby with a life and rhythm all its own. Till for no reason, fear came. Not a creeping Jesus kind, but a sudden growing anxiety that something was on its way that would jelly the fibers of the growing child. Afraid, and not knowing of what. Unable to tell even when asked, because she didn't know. Only at odd unexpected moments would it be a fear of *something*. Then one night, Andy Prince told her his eyes were bad and he had a headache. With a sigh that broke against her shoulder he told her. But caught in her own drama she couldn't believe in headaches. She told him to get himself an aspirin; and that, she remembered afterward, was the last thing she was ever to tell him.

She didn't know it then, but Andy Prince had meningitis. And after only ten days Andy Prince was dead. She had never believed he would die. March's search for the sick, the weak, and the dying would not find Andy Prince. She'd see to that. She'd pitch her strength against the stone an unmerciful God was bent on rolling against her mouth. The weather too was on her side. That year it was soft, fresh, and dry.

The air was filled with talk of Christ and lilies. And in the chapels, unlit virgin wax candles soared against the drapes of mourn-

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ing purple. But the windows of the shops she passed on her way to and from the Army hospital where he was were filled with Easter. And silver- and gold-papered eggs and fluffy grinning ghost-chickens. They grinned and winked as she passed. Dug with their claws their little feathered selves right down into the hollow darkness of her heart. And laughed outright as she shrank from them and from Andy Prince's screams. For five days Andy Prince screamed, and his eyeballs walled up in a corner were stuck and blind. Inside the room with the windows open, he lay there finally on that high narrow white bed, his face turned from her, his fair head drawn back in a buckled way. He lay on that bed, Andy Prince did. Powerless now even to scream. He died on Easter morning. The loveliest of mornings. In the street, children passing carried colored straw baskets stuffed with the glitter of eggs bouquet'd with pink and blue and bold red ribbons. His brother the farmer came mumbling prayers from Limerick to take him back to the family grave. But even then she didn't believe he was dead, not till she saw the coffin. Then she knew. After that he came to her in dreams, Andy Prince did. He came the night his son was born dead. And for a while in Grangegorman the madhouse, till she was shifted from the open ward to the cell on her own. After that Andy Prince stopped coming.

She was in that cell for eleven long months. On a mattress on the floor. Like an animal. When she did stir she crawled on all fours. Knocked out they kept her, so that most of the time she saw nothing and heard nothing. When she did see again, the first thing she saw was frost. February frost crusting puddles in the yard like milk curdling round a baby's mouth. One morning a nurse with eyes that could shiver glass lifted her to her feet and took her out onto the landing where the windows were. There were no windows in her cell. And one morning they gave her clothes. Somebody else's. They lived a life of their own, those clothes did. She used to go where they took her.

Till a man told her she could go. But he didn't say where. "I guess he never thought he had to," Ellen Simms said, and sat remote as stone and her mouth finished was sad and quiet. Annie had been rocking slightly in her chair, tilting it back, then letting the front legs hit the floor with little taps, her hands holding the table edge for balance. She stopped rocking when Ellen Simms stopped speaking and sat now with her hands round her throat, as if unknown words were there or inside strange feelings were flowering.

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Alison Colbert

A TALK WITH ALLEN GINSBERG

INT: I want to ask you first about the recording, *Songs of Innocence and Experience,* which I listened to recently. I want to ask you when the idea for the music and the songs came to you. You said in the liner notes that you had a vision of sorts.

GINSBERG: Many years ago, described at length in a bunch of interviews five, six years ago. Mainly, *Paris Review* No. 47 . . . of, uh, Blake's voice, not a vision of auditory illumination, but specific music to the voice on the way back from Los Gatos in a Greyhound bus to San Francisco coming from Darshan with Neal Cassady's ashes. A couple of lines kept running through my head in musical tone.

Fayette 'fayette, thou art bought and sold
and sold is the happy morrow
Thou gavest the tears of pity away
In exchange for the tears of sorrow.

which is a fragment of Blake, not in *Songs of Innocence and Experience,* about the French Revolution, about Lafayette's relation to Tom Paine, and Lafayette's defense of the king and queen.

INT: He sold out, in other words.

GINSBERG: Yeah, Blake was saying, though Lafayette was like a big American revolutionary, he sold out for pity. That is, I gather.

INT: I'm a little rusty on history.

GINSBERG: So am I, so am I, but it keeps floating up out of my rusty unconscious. Anyway, this tune came with it, for the first time and then I had confused it with another poem called "The Grey Monk," which has the lines

"But vain the Sword & vain the Bow
They never can work War's overthrow"

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so I got 'em mixed up and began humming a tune in my heart on the bus. Then when I got home I started working with a harmonium and making a tune for both poems, "The Grey Monk" and the poem that begins

"Let the Brothels of Paris be opened
To the beautiful queen of France"

which has a line about "Fayette, Fayette, thou art bought and sold and sold *is* the happy morrow"

Thou gavest the tears of pity away
In exchange for the tears of sor-row

so it developed from that seed, then finished with working with, improvising with Daniel Moore of the Tibetan Floating Lotus Opera Company, who's a good musician and poet. . . . So we made a couple of tapes together with him on horns and Don Cherry and Cyril Hefter on trumpets and singing with it. So I worked out a melody for that one song and went from there home and sort of thought about it awhile, and then, at the Democratic Convention in '68 in Chicago, sang that song in Lincoln Park on Sunday of convention week with John Sinclair as M.C. for like a rock-political concert. So I was laying down "vain the Sword & vain the Bow / They never can work War's overthrow" and then sat under the trees and sang it to Phil Ochs also, who was there also at the time. Then when I got home from the convention after the police-state-shock / raw planet nerves exposed . . . upstate to a farm where I had a large organ, pump organ, nineteenth-century keyboard, foot pedal pump, no electric. . . .

INT: Church organ.

GINSBERG: Yeah, I'd already had about five years experience singing monochordal — with one chord — C chord mostly, or c minor, uh, *mantra* — *mantra* chanting, with Hari Krishna *mantra* and with a lot of others. Tibetan ones. So I hadn't gone beyond one chord, but I'd gotten good at variation within one chord. So I began holding the chord and putting — like "The Grey Monk" is C-seventh, I found out later. So I began experimenting with other chords besides the C and improvising tunes on a Uher tape recorder that I had. I was holding the chord down and then improvising melodies for more of the Blake. I think the second one I did was "Piping down the Valley Wild," the introduction, one night. And then I began thinking in terms of trying to write 'em down but I didn't know how. So Lee Crabtree, who was one of the early Fugs musicians, came up and

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stayed for a couple of months and taught me a little bit about chords and then Cyril Caster came up and stayed and taught me more about chords till I could work with two chords or three chords. But they started making chord notations for me and also transcribing it for me. And then I began learning how to write the melody line myself and then later someone taught me the basic principle of chords which is major chord is the first note then you count up four more, then you count up three more. . . .

INT: You never had piano lessons when you were a kid?

GINSBERG: Yeah, when I was nine.

INT: It didn't stick?

GINSBERG: That's right. I hit my mother over the breast finally, I was so angry. So, I slowly began learning notations so at this point, A.D. 1971, I can write lead sheets. Except for time; I can't put the time bars in, I haven't experimented with that. So, in other words, it begins with a vision, with a much earlier vision, years ago. With a realization of ashes of the body, ashes of sexuality, seeing Neal Cassady's ashes. With a realization of the ashes of the body of American democracy in Chicago. And then attempting to vocalize the wisest language sounds . . . from Blake.

INT: When you did the recording, were there rehearsals?

GINSBERG: I had it all written down, finally. I had the music written down and we actually rehearsed — a lot. I mean not a lot as professionals do, but like we had a couple evenings with Don Cherry and Bob Doro and Cyril Caster and other people who are on the album. We had formal rehearsals with music stands and pianos at people's houses and we taped them — and filmed some of them even. At Robert Frank's house, the movie maker. And then some things were rehearsed at my house with John Sholle, the guitarist, who's a studio guitarist, and is very brilliant and who immediately picked up — a kind of feminine intelligence. He was able to follow along and bring *me on* — musically.

INT: Did you make very many improvisations in rehearsal at all, things which sort of came out from working together?

GINSBERG: The whole thing is an improvisation in the sense that all the main lines are laid down, like the track with Elvin Jones is, I think, the second or third of three attempts done in the studio without rehearsal. The Elvin Jones was without rehearsal. Some of the people that were working on the record were, uh, unstable. And so surprises came in and we had to improvise whatever we could.

INT: Yeah. Cause that's one of the things I specially liked about it, especially like the *Songs of Innocence,* there's a very spontaneous

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sort of sound, which is really nice. Are you doing any more work on this? Are you going to put out another album?

GINSBERG: I did twenty-one out of the forty-five songs, so I'll make another album now and complete the whole cycle, for Volume II of that and that'll actually be monumental, because it'll be the complete *Songs of Innocence and Experience* from beginning to end, every one of them put to tune. I'll probably do that this spring. I've been writing the music down.

INT: As it comes to you?

GINSBERG: Working on one song at a time. You've been picking up on one song at a time as it rises, politically significant, like the "Schoolboy," "How can a bird that is born for joy / sit in a cage and sing?" I began working on around the time of Kent State, last year. You notice that the poems have a particular reference, a little hermetic sometimes, to any time-space continuum, to any political event, and individual poems, like *koans,* like Zen *koans,* have a relevance right now either to — like it appeals to certain emotional softnesses and tendernesses and innocencies which are completely repressed in the revolutionary-counterrevolutionary battle, so they have to be recalled with things like the schoolboy poem. As I get into sitting — meditation — which I've been doing a lot of lately, Blake's gnostic transcendental psychedelic inner glow comes on . . . .

INT: So it works both ways.

GINSBERG: Yeah.

INT: That's what's so incredible about it. You said somewhere — I read *Indian Journals* fairly recently — you said that Blake was sort of your guru.

GINSBERG: Yeah. Cause I'd had what would normally be considered a religious experience with Blake in 1948. When I went to India, running around looking for a guru in 1962-3, one funny thing that Srimata Krishnaji, a lady saint from Brindiban, recommended was "Take Blake for your guru." Since guru, the teacher, is not necessarily a human or living human incarnation, it might be any influence, even a bird or the giant piteous cat-squeak of a whale recorded on a machine. Anything that will catalyze the total consciousness is the teacher. So she said, "Take Blake for your guru," and that put him in the context, oddly, of the Indian transcendental scene. In a personal way, though historically Blake always has been in that context, cause he's an eighteenth-century vehicle for Western gnostic tradition that historically you can trace back to the same roots, same cities, same geography, same mushrooms, that give rise to the Aryan, Zoroastrian, Manichaean pre-Hindu yogas.

INT: I didn't know that.

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GINSBERG: Yeah, that's the whole point. If you're interested in the line of descent, I'll tell you — back from Blake through Paracelsus and Plotinus and Jakob Böhme all the way back to Pythagoras, and back from, back to in those days, the Eleusinian mysteries and the Bacchic mysteries to the mystery cults, and back through the mystery cults to the Near East, back to the source of it all, you come to the same sources.

INT: And he was aware of all this?

GINSBERG: Yes, Blake had a great collection of those texts — in fact, I understand he handled manuscripts.

INT: Yeah. He was a bookseller.

GINSBERG: A manuscript-seller. He handled some of the gnostic manuscripts. But one of the great people that influenced him was a guy named Thomas Taylor, the Platonist. Taylor is a very interesting figure, a very interesting psychedelic gnostic figure, in Europe and in America. Taylor was a great Latin-Greek scholar who translated all of the remaining gnostic fragments and made them available to eighteenth-century cats, so that Shelley, as well as Blake, Coleridge, other heads of that time, picked up on Thomas Taylor's translations.

INT: Yeah. And were enabled to take what they read further into their own thing.

GINSBERG: Yeah. And at the same time, Bronson Alcott, from America, of the Brook Farm commune, the early enlarged family experiments so typical of nineteenth-century America, went to England to get Thomas Taylor's books and translations — brought them back and loaned them to Emerson. So that the same sources Blake was using, tracing back to the Middle East, were also influential in the formation of the American individualistic transcendentalist tradition which is so influential now in, say, the antiwar revolutionary movement.

INT: The other thing I wanted to ask you about Blake was whether you'd been able to get into the *Prophetic Books* at all.

GINSBERG: No, I've been sort of hung-up in the simpler, earlier poems. I read in and out of the *Prophetic Books.*

INT: Because I tried at one point. It was pretty difficult.

GINSBERG: OK. The cosmic geography of the *Prophetic Books,* cosmology, that Blake outlines and changes around, year by year to the end, is parallel to the cosmography and cosmogony that you find outlined in the gnostic religions, pre-Christian, pre-Christ, including the names that Blake uses, like Ruha is the Mandaean gnostic name for the evil female first principle, otherwise known as Sophia, wisdom, in other places, and in Blake's *Songs of Experience* known as Tirzah, the chick who created the whole cosmic chaos because she was reflecting the empty light of the abyss. She was a reflection of that

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light, in fact. But once she began reflecting the mirrors multiplied until the entire Indra's net of creation was established, like billions of mirrors shining on each other, creating a giant illusion of space and time. So, it all wound up in the Garden of Eden.

INT: Which is sort of what I expected. Is this the same as the Pandora figure?

GINSBERG: Probably they're parallel put-downs. Parallel anti-Women's Lib put-downs.

INT: Yeah. Because Kate Millett talks about this a good deal. She doesn't talk about the Indian. She talks mostly about the Western.

GINSBERG: The really interesting thing to realize is that the Indian and the Western converge in their origin. They come from the same Garden of Eden, or the same Middle Eastern source. The reason we don't know much about it is that when Constantine the Great accepted Christ as a Roman Emperor accepting Christ, he also became Pope. So it was a political deal. So the Christians had to make a deal to eliminate all the heresies, and that was the Council of Nicea.

INT: The many, many cults.

GINSBERG: Yeah. These were the gnostic cults. So the books were all burnt around 313 A.D. The only records we have of them, which Taylor translated, is from the early Church fathers, arguing against these heresies, heresies like saying, I think Heraclitus said, "Everything we see when awake, is death; and when asleep, dream." In other words, the Buddhist *maya*. Everything we see when awake, is death, is the same thing as the Hindu or Buddhist proposition that all, or the Burroughsian proposition, that all apparent sensory feelings, thoughts and impressions are illusory. So, in other words, what happened in the fourth century is that the basic Indian understanding that the apparent physical universe is only apparent, and really is a dream-structure in which we're trapped, because attached to a thing that's real — that was extirpated from Christ-doctrine, and also the books wiped out and burned, so that it took people like Paracelsus, Böhme, Blake, Shelley, Coleridge, Emerson, to perpetuate that memory out of their own intuitions and glimmerings — and also checking out the hand-me-down legends and texts, the oral transmission. Poetry's carried it all along. Poetry's carried the dream-insight all along.

INT: I wanted to ask you about William Carlos Williams. I read the poem you wrote about his death, which I liked. I just had always had the impression that he was a very beautiful man, by all accounts.

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Did he, like when you were growing up in New Jersey, did he look at your manuscripts?

GINSBERG: Yeah. When I was grown up already. . . . First time I met him I was twenty-two. I had read his poetry when I was in college but college so perverted my brain about poetry that I still expected some sort of rhyme.

INT: Columbia English Department did that?

GINSBERG: Columbia English Department. And in those days, 1945–46, they were saying that Whitman was a jerk, that Shelley wasn't a real poet, that Williams was some kind of awkward crude provincial from New Jersey. That was sort of like the official doctrine, the party line of the English department, not only at Columbia, but at every university in the United States.

INT: Yeah. But in those days, Columbia was supposed to be more enlightened.

GINSBERG: No, no. The point was that in those days in the forties, there was nobody there teaching who wrote poetry, who wrote any kind of modern poetry.

INT: So you went to Williams, I guess, partly because he did not have an academic attitude.

GINSBERG: I went to him because he baffled me. I'd picked up some of his books which were printed by the Cumington Press, which is like a little home press up in Vermont — and I couldn't understand why he was writing funny-paged writings, with the words scattered around on the page, why there were irregular lines, and I couldn't understand what he was talking about, really. I read it and I didn't understand it, literally — I didn't understand the literal meaning of what he was saying, if he was writing about wheelbarrows or whatever. So I went to interview him for a local labor newspaper in Paterson, as an excuse. I had the impression that he was some sort of stainless steel 1920s *moderne* visage out of Brancusi and Ezra Pound and Alfred Steiglitz's American Place Gallery, where he used to hang out. Instead I found a creaky-voiced, tender-toned, soft though sharp-eyed country doc, scratching his head, so I asked him, "Do you think of yourself as a poet, or as a doctor?" And he said, "As a doctor." Then I asked, "Why do you write almost-prose lines?" and he said, "Yesterday I heard a Polish laborer say, "I'll kick yuh eye." And he wrote it down on his prescription pad. "I'll kick 'y' 'u' 'h' 'e' 'y' 'e'," and he said, "How do you put that into iambic pentameter?" "I'll kick yuh eye — " it's a funny little rhythm all its own. So I suddenly realized he was hearing with raw ears. The sound, pure sound and rhythm — as it was spoken around him, and

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he was trying to adapt his poetry rhythms out of the actual talk-rhythms he heard in the place that he was, rather than metronome or sing-song archaic literary rhythms he would hear in a place inside his head from having read other writings. I suddenly realized he was inventing out of the actual ground of Rutherford, New Jersey, a different body-speech and that anything he said was absolutely natural, and didn't violate human being talk, didn't come from another era but came directly from the ground that he stood on. But I still didn't really understand the poems. I got the general idea — but then about a half year later I went to the Museum of Modern Art in New York and I heard him read, and he read one poem that I immediately understood was just somebody talking and making sense. And it made absolute sense.

INT: It has a rhythmic structure. . . .

GINSBERG: Well, I'll kick yuh eye is a rhythmic twiddle.

INT: It doesn't have the bomp-and-bomp-and. . . .

GINSBERG: It's not the iambic high school rhythmic structure. But it's the rhythmic structure of someone talking sincerely and earnestly, with the changes of mind that go on when somebody stops to figure out the word — and then begins again with another squaggle of phrasing — or stops in the middle of a sentence to go on to something else, because the mind changes. I heard him read another poem called "The Clouds," which is about people getting lost in their imaginations and forgetting about concrete earth-speech and fact things — and it was a poem that ended in talking about people's minds going off into the clouds, "plunging upon a moth, a butterfly, a pissmire, uhh. . . ."

INT: Yeah.

GINSBERG: Not oh yeah. "Plunging upon a moth, a butterfly, a pissmire, uhh, dot, dot, dot." Unquote. And when he read it, he read it almost impatiently, (*fast*) "Plunging upon a moth, a butterfly, a pissmire, hupp. . . ." And then he waved his hands in the air — he just gave up. So I suddenly realized it was just like somebody talking in a bar, not finishing the sentence but just giving up with a gesture of impatience, and that it was a syntactical fact of speech that had never been written down before in poetry — and so I suddenly realized that his poetry was absolutely identical with speech, the highest speech, but absolutely identical, rhythmically and syntactically. And then I suddenly realized that if you began right where you are, with your own speech, then obviously you would have to create a whole new world of speech, that had never been written down before, which was what he was doing and what anybody could do. But

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it also meant that you had to listen, as he advised, very carefully, to your own sound, and to other people's talk-sound and talk-rhythms — and if you listened to "I'll kick yuh eye" or "plunging on a pissmire, uhh. . . ."! you would arrive at all sorts of new unknown rhythms. And oddly enough just at this time I was talking with Kerouac quite a bit, who was, by his own nature, doing the same thing, and leaning for support on the new rhythms he was hearing in music at the time among the blacks around Minton's — cause Kerouac at that time had been listening to the early Bird Parker, and Gillespie and Monk, and earlier a lot of Lester Young, and had been turning me on to all those musicians: and the key thing that he realized about them was that they had made the rhythm section into solo instruments with varying and variable rhythmic bases, just like Williams had variable rhythmic bases. So there was a parallel breakthrough going on in the music and in the poetry-speech.

INT: Could you like sort of work on this in your own head and try and get into it in your own writing?

GINSBERG: Yeah, immediately. I went over my prose writings, and I took out little four- or five-line fragments that were absolutely accurate to somebody's speak-talk-thinking and rearranged them in lines, according to the breath, according to how you'd break it up if you were actually to talk it out, and then I sent 'em over to Williams. He sent me back a note, almost immediately, and he said, "These are it! Do you have any more of these?" So apparently I'd caught on, to something so simple that the entire English department at Columbia University couldn't understand it, and never did get to understand it until perhaps two decades later — if at all, cause I don't think it's still understood. It's just a very simple basic principle that you listen to speech to hear rhythms and attempt to isolate the archetypal rhythms of actual speech and then remodel them in the poems. That's the whole basis, really, of what was later known as projective verse in Charles Olson and the whole gang of poets, friends and lovers of his. Black Mountain and elsewhere, San Francisco and New York. Oddly, you see, Williams influenced all the Black Mountain people, he influenced Gary Snyder and Phillip Whalen and Lew Welsh out in San Francisco and he influenced Robert Duncan and Mike McClure in San Francisco, he influenced Frank O'Hara and Kenneth Koch and John Ashbery here. The influence was that originality of taking the materials from your own existence rather than taking on hand-me-down poetic materials, speech units, rhythmic units and trying to adapt your life to them — you articulate *your* rhythm, your own rhythms. The concept of that led in the forties to

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Abstract Expressionist painting and DeKooning and Kline, it led in music to Ornette Coleman and uh, who was a teacher there? The guy who died two years ago. Coltrane. It was the same American rediscovery of individual soul's impulse that led into Coltrane. It also influenced LeRoi Jones by quite a bit, Williams's practice. It brought Jones back to Newark, in a sense. If any literary influence had tended in that direction, Williams's influence tended to bring Jones back home to his own speech and to his own soul and to his own body and to his own color and to his own town.

INT: Yeah. You said "prose sentences." Have you published that much prose, other than *Indian Journals?*

GINSBERG: Yeah. Actually, I've published what would be a big thick volume of prose essays, manifestos, interviews, blurbs and prefaces, and reviews and exclamatory paragraphs over a long period of time — which are all put in one drawer, so I've got to edit them. I was supposed to have done that five years ago, but I keep adding to it, and I haven't had time to collect it and edit it.

INT: The thing I noticed — *Indian Journals* I gathered was taken from notebooks you had written at the time.

GINSBERG: Yeah. They're taken almost unchanged from those books. The editing of that involved just cutting out a bunch of dreams that were so private and long-winded that they were boring.

INT: Yeah. You see, I read that and then I read the poems that had come from that. It's kind of a work in progress to see how the poems were written first longer and some not included at all in the book, published at that time, which I think. . . . What is it, *Planet News*?

GINSBERG: Yeah. I only used three or four poems from *Planet News.* I just took the ones that were complete, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and put them in *Planet News.* You could say they were poems — there's no difference, it's just all writing, is the point. Some of them, for convenience's sake, I'd isolate, and I still do, take them out as poems, cause they stand on four legs and they can be read by themselves, but most of the things that are in verse don't stand on four legs in *Indian Journals,* they depend on the previous context.

INT: But it was illustrative of a compositional method which I thought was very good to read.

GINSBERG: You see that the point is that those journals are just what was written down on the spot, not changed, so that it gives you the quality of the writing at the time, the quality of the mind at the time.

INT: I was interested in it also as a prose writer, to see how it developed.

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GINSBERG: I learned most of my sense of prose from Kerouac. A little from Burroughs, mostly from Kerouac. Both poetry and prose. Kerouac is like *the* great unacknowledged poet. You know, he has one great book of poetry out, called *Mexico City Blues,* that Grove Press reissued in 1970, and he's got several manuscripts of poetry, unpublished. He's got one called *Pomes All Sizes,* and then there is another manuscript of scattered poems, things he published in little magazines, like LeRoi Jones's *Yugen* in '59, that have now been collected and Ferlinghetti's gonna publish.

INT: Eventually City Lights'll bring this out?

GINSBERG: This year, I think. Yeah, I'm supposed to write a little prefatory note describing uh . . . his stroke of genius.

INT: Yeah. I've never been sure of the religious part of what's called the Beat philosophy, just what the source of this was.

GINSBERG: Goddard's *Buddhist Bible,* which has now been reissued, and available, which is like a great compilation of Buddhist texts, Lancasatara Sutra, Suragama Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, Bodhisatva's Vows, Four Noble Truths, Theory of Interdependent Origination. Kerouac and Cassady and other people were reading in that in 1950 around San Jose, when Kerouac was living with Cassady. Cassady was at the time hung up on Edgar Cayce, ideas of reincarnation, so Kerouac, always impressed by Cassady's intuitions, went back to the sources, went back to the original Oriental texts, which he found in this one compilation, the *Buddhist Bible,* which he studied real hard. So that Kerouac then began writing on Buddhist matters, and he had a great unpublished thousand-page manuscript called *Some of the Dharma,* which is Buddhist meditations, *haikus,* philosophical reflections, quotes from Suragama Sutra, little poems all sizes. Then I had a sort of mystical experience in 1948, as I mentioned, relating to Blake, which specifically was an auditory illumination, you could call it an auditory epiphany, hearing Blake's voice — and at the same time a visual illumination of light permeated the universe, and a heart epiphany of the ancient of days, the father of man being present everywhere, in everybody always. So, in other words, I had a cosmic vibration breakthrough. Kerouac had one in the fifties, which he describes in his Sutra Scripture, *Scripture of the Golden Eternity,* a little pamphlet put out in Newark by Corinth Books, in which he describes sitting and doing breathing exercises and suddenly fainting in his back yard — with his eyes closed, sitting and looking at the sun, with a golden light coming through his eyelids, realizing that this golden eternity is the permeating suchness of the entire universe. Burroughs always has had a pre-

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occupation with alteration of consciousness, from an early text of 1951, *Junkie,* pseudonym William Lee, the last pages discussing *yage,* a drug in South America, as perhaps being the final fix. So we already had "native moments," what Whitman calls "native moments," which we then began checking out with ancient moments and ancient texts. And then, in the early fifties in San Francisco we ran into Gary Snyder, who was already studying Zen Buddhism and sitting, doing regular meditation, and Phil Whelan, who was a Buddhist poet from Reed College like Gary, both of whom had met Williams up in Reed College in 1948, the same year that I picked up on Williams.

INT: So it all sort of converged?

GINSBERG: Yeah. Now the Zen practice was paying complete absorbed attention to the immediate teapot and teacup in front of you and pouring the tea with complete absorption and intention, with the mind focused there, observing every wavelet and droplet coming out of the spout into the teacup and then serving it with complete presence to the person in front of you. Blake's proposition was that "concrete particulars" were the essence of poetry and consciousness observation to see eternity, uh, no, "to seek all Heaven in a grain of sand, and eternity in an hour." Williams's proposition from American roots was: "so much depends/ upon/ a red wheel/ barrow/ glazed with rain/ water/ beside the white/ chickens." When Williams said "so much depends," he means all human consciousness depends on direct observation of what's in front of you. So all those tendencies converged at once around '48 to '53 in our consciousness, and I think elsewhere, too. See, Berkeley at the time was going through what was called the Berkeley Renaissance, where Harry Smith the great filmmaker was hanging around with Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan the poet, and Timothy Leary was on the scene and knew Robert Duncan. And that was called the Berkeley Renaissance, where Harry Smith was beginning to experiment with optical phenomena in relation to mandalas and Tibetan and American Indian psychic color effects, who built machinery for casting light-color shadows on the wall, who left his machinery to a guy named Jordan Belson in San Francisco who was a great filmmaker, who made a movie called *Mandala* in the fifties and was one of the first people in the mid-fifties, with Gerd Stern, to begin experimenting in large movie theaters with oils on water on plates with light casting on a movie screen, which led to light shows, which led a decade later to large-scale use of that in Ken Kesey's experiments with Neal Cassady on mixed-media feedback. Which then led to the trips festivals, elec-

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tronic cut-up mixed-media decor which led into use of that omnipresent rainbow of consciousness in the Fillmore.

INT: So it all started in '48?

GINSBERG: I don't know if it all started then — it crested then. From gossip I know, there was a lot of tip-of-the-iceberg showing, or the mountain rose above sea level just about then. Synchronicity. It was inevitable, cause it was the end of the war. A couple of years after the end of the war, so everybody's mind was beginning to drift. The thing I wanted to point out was that there was a breakthrough of, let us say, an enlarged or cosmic consciousness or a big consciousness. There was that consciousness breaking through the social norms and the social repression of consciousness and through the institutionalized repression of consciousness, right then and there.

INT: That's where school fits in.

GINSBERG: Yeah. It was the use of grass, and peyote and other psychedelics then, already in the early fifties and in the mid-fifties. Let's see, there was the catalytic contact with Black culture in the shift of rhythmic base of the body, which is well known, like in *On the Road,* which describes that period, actually, which Cleaver read, recognizing Kerouac's discovery — Cleaver enjoyed recognizing Kerouac's discovery of that repressed aspect of American body-rhythm and humanity.

INT: Kerouac's description, which is quoted in *Soul on Ice.* Are you now, are you just into meditation now, or are you doing. . . .

GINSBERG: I was out in Detroit last week, raising money for John Sinclair, on a platform with William Kunstler. And then in court testifying for Sinclair before the judge.

INT: Some people I've known that have really gotten into meditation, sometimes they even stop smoking grass.

GINSBERG: Yeah. Well, I should stop smoking cigarettes and I'm ashamed that I do, these last couple of months. . . . The Buddhist thing is one way of understanding the relation between action and meditation. The first of the Bodhisattva's vows — the Bodhisattva is one who sets himself on the path to enlightenment, or perhaps glimpsed enlightenment, and now wants to incorporate it completely. So the Buddhist Bodhisattva's vows are as follows: Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all. Passions are numberless, I vow to extinguish them all. The gates of the *dharma* (truth, nature) are numberless, I vow to enter every one. And the fourth: Buddha-path most high, I vow to follow through. Now the first vow is "Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all." That means that anybody who is a Bodhisattva on the path is not allowed to go to Nirvana all by himself alone and disappear into eternity like the

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Great Masturbator. It means that nobody can be a Buddha unless everybody is a Buddha, nobody can be enlightened and safe unless everybody is enlightened and safe. That means that the Yoga practice of the Bodhisattva, basically, to enlighten others before he himself, is finally enlightened and gets out of the Wheel of Time. It means that you've got to work with other people, to help other people, to be helped by other people, to breathe in their pain and breathe out your peacefulness, to take on the bum effects of all the bum causes floating around Western capitalist society and Eastern Communist authoritarianism. It means, as with the image of Indra's net that I was talking about, that one diamond in the net reflects the sparkle of every other diamond, in every other corner of the net, cause the net is tying all the diamonds of consciousness together, and when you move one, they all reflect each other, and the whole net shimmers and moves. So we're all reflecting each other's causes, we're all reflecting each other's effects, we're all involved in the Great Chain of Being, we're all involved in each other's *karma,* we're all involved in each other's consciousness, we're all involved in each other's money, we're all involved in each other's coal ashes, we're all involved in each other's plastic, we're all involved in each other's electricity, we're all involved in each other's murder, we're all involved in each other's napalming, we're all involved in each other's bacteriological warfare, we're all involved in each other's taxpaying, we're all involved in each other's national budget, we're all involved in each other's rubber automobile wheels — so that one person really can't make it by himself. So, for the Buddhists at any rate, that's the built-in connection to social action. There's an interesting early poem of Gary Snyder's, paraphrasing the Buddhist vow, from 1956, when he left for Japan. He says, "long as any hitchhiker on the Pacific coast shivers in the cold and can't get a ride, I vow not to enter Nirvana./ As long as any wage-slave is tricked by broken, shoddy auto brakes, I vow not to enter Nirvana,/ As long as any widow is starving in Oakland, I vow not to enter Nirvana." So what I propose, for myself, right now, is at least one hour's daily sitting, cross-legged, back straight, eyes open or closed, breath slow and relaxed, belly out loose, abdominal breathing, with or without a *mantra,* concentration, meditation, every day, preferably in the mornings, at a regular hour, before going out and accomplishing whatever social actions are indicated to get other people out of trouble and end other people's pain, and dissolve the police state authoritarian capitalist conspicuous-consumption economy that's poisoning the planet.

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INT: What I said before, you didn't directly answer whether you felt that drugs were directly contrary to this in some ways.

GINSBERG: No, directly contrary is words. And it immediately sets up whole poles of polarized thinking, which is unnecessary. What I would propose is using actual mediation to get high, to regain consciousness, to either supplement the drugs with meditation, to replace the drugs with meditation, or to augment the meditation with drugs, but to make the meditation the backbone of both political and consciousness exploration activity as a necessary ritual stabilizing influence in any kind of action — whether in drug-taking or politics, or even religion, the actual sitting is the stabilizing factor, the practical side, the real praxis, because that's the thing that teaches patience, that's the thing that teaches observation and mind-consciousness, that's the thing that makes you more and more sensitized to internal rumblings and auras and neural patterns, that's the thing that profiles your consciousness for you.

INT: I remember when I was sort of poking around in preparation for this — there was an interview in the New Orleans underground paper. . . .

GINSBERG: The *Nola Express.*

INT: In which you said something like that especially radicals should try to get into this.

GINSBERG: Well, particularly for those radicals who want to renounce use of psychedelics as being either too strong or too disorienting or too much of an interference with their political activity — if an eight-hour trip leaves them too vulnerable to police violence and entrapment also, they would be invulnerable with a good solid hour of morning sitting — and that could replace psychedelics if it were pursued regularly, daily, and seriously. But there's no excuse not to include a larger consciousness in any revolution. Because the whole revolution attracted people and got people on because it began out of the body, it began out of the recognition of a larger consciousness — and because of the ecological crisis, any effective revolution that will save the planet will have to include all sentient beings, will have to include the Bodhisattva's vow, will have to include the deeper realization of our ultimate nature — otherwise we'll just have another mad revolution with Blacks shooting whites, and whites shooting Blacks, the Left disordered and having *putsches* and having arguments with each other, and arresting each other and putting each other in chains after victory power is gained, like other revolutions have been. So in order to insure that the revolution be won as divine, because we're now God, we can end the planet, you know,

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that makes us that much of a god, so if we've got the responsibility to take power over the universe like that, or over the human universe, we have to have the consciousness balanced sufficiently broadly to make decisions which are not going to exterminate whales, or human sensitives.

INT: Have you read the "New Morning" statement, the Bernadine Dorn statement? Did it change your attitude toward Weathermen at all?

GINSBERG: Mmm . . . No, I always felt sympathetic because I always felt that they were sincere. I thought that they did fall into what the "New Morning" statement called the "military error" and the *macho* error of confusing guns with a phallus. I'm not really in a position to criticize since they gave their bodies so painfully to what they thought was necessary. They were like extremely sensitive to the pain on the other side of the planet, and I think they were doing the best they could, certainly doing better than the government. The government is indulging in murderous violence on so vast a scale that nobody's mind can contain it. That's why it's easy to headline the Weatherman's bomb, lonely little bomb, lonely little antirobot bomb, that wasn't intended for humans, even. I don't know if anybody's got any answer that really will save us all. I don't.

INT: Have you ever done things like what the Berrigans did, like pouring blood on draft files?

GINSBERG: I once threatened to send a paper bag full of shit up to *Time* magazine in 1958. No, just things like getting arrested with Doctor Spock at Whitehall, blocking the steps. If we can all hold it together, I think, if we can *all* hold it together, that means all of us, you know — Weathermen to liberals to Panthers — I think large-scale non-violent — non-violent against humans — active resistance, civil disobedience might help edge the nation toward ending the war and taking on a greater consciousness, but it would require a complete community to do that. And would require trust to do it — it would require acting out the new nation that we're talking about, or that everybody — that *we* are talking about. . . . One problem in mass groupings, mass assemblages, has been that, I think, it would be necessary to call out grandmothers and babies. Now grandmothers and babies and middle-class folk could withstand the violence of the police, or take it, or be martyred, or whatever, could prevent large-scale carnage. But they can't do that if, in the large crowd, there are police-agent *provocateurs* creating chaotic undisciplined violence — insanity rages — or if there are political radicals insistent on forcing their own apocalyptic fright on others to make a political confronta-

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tion between the masses and the police. Cause I still think that one of the necessary things is to bring the police over to our side, and I think the whole pig *mantra* is an inefficient way of transforming the consciousness of the police. The pig *mantra* creates what it calls for or fortifies what it calls for. So it calls for that violence; it calls for that piggishness, just like the freak *mantra,* which is overused, too, calls for freakishness from citizens just trying to get their rights, and government murder. So the whole pig-freak contest should be abandoned, and get the grandmas and the babies out. I don't know, now, because everybody is so hysterical and frightened, and world doom is so apparent, whether people can contain themselves and get themselves together steadily and resolutely and calmly enough for community action on a large scale like that, that would be impervious to government subversion and attack. The problem is that a large-scale public assembly can always be broken up by somebody tossing bottles and stones to get the police to toss tear gas, to make the place where everybody is assembled relatively uninhabitable. And that may be a consequence of simple overpopulation. (*Laughs*) It may be that everything is so gigantic-sized now that it really is like New York City's garbage system — out of control — partly as a result of mechanical size, partly as a result of greed capitalism, also partly as a result of mechanical size. It's like a dinosaur where the brain doesn't get the message back to the tail fast enough, and you have to develop an independent brain in the tail — and the head brain and the tail brain don't cooperate when the glaciers come down, so that the dinosaur founders in some frozen . . . swamp?

INT: Have you done very much work with the Gay Activist movement that's come up recently?

GINSBERG: I did a little. I went around the day after I heard about the Stonewall battle. I went down the next night and spent the evening in the Stonewall, drinking and dancing. I went to the first college Gay Liberation dance in Normal, Illinois.

INT: Normal?

GINSBERG: Yes, there really is a place called Normal, Illinois. It's the state university — it's big — twenty thousand people there. Presumably, with twenty or thirty thousand people there should have been two or three thousand gay, but only like two hundred showed up. But what was interesting — the door was manned by the SDS, the Women's Lib came with their babies and boy friends, the Black Liberation Front provided the music and the ritual dancing, so it was like a big coalition.

INT: That hasn't happened so much in New York.

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GINSBERG: Well, it's a *natural* flow together. It would be if all the minority groups, put together, would form a majority. If they realized it, you know. I haven't cause I'm. . . . See, what I feel, more and more, I just disperse a lot of my energy in running around the country; poetry readings, benefits, research on drugs and drug politics, and research on police peddling drugs and research on CIA involvement with opium traffic in Indochina and the Mediterranean, with farming, with music, with tape work, legal matters like Chicago, Sinclair, or other things involving the repression of underground media, with war tax resistance — so that actually I'm finding I'm less and less effective in any single one area — cause I'm spread too thin, and less and less effective as a poet. And any usefulness that I might have to other people is probably through poetry and music, ultimately, rather than through smart clerical research on the fact that two chief narcotics officers in New York in a row, *the* two chief narcotics officers in New York, were forced to resign from their spot or were busted for peddling, and other . . . matters. And I'm probably better off as a poet, rather than going into that, so what I would like to do is get myself back, get my energy focused there, on language and on poetry, rather than tromping around in the streets, which I've been doing a lot of recently.

INT: Well, actually, when I think about it, a poem like "Howl" . . .

GINSBERG: Has more actual political effect than my getting up and making a speech or coming out to appear at a benefit for the *Liberated Guardian* or Liberation News Service. You see, I've done things like that, but, as more time goes on, I see that I'm losing the Muse's attention. (*Laughs*) In other words, to write a good long poem with good rhythm, enough to penetrate consciousness, requires sitting at a table without a telephone for a week, at least, writing ten hours or so, because you don't really get hot until the eighth or ninth hour. It's like meditation — you don't really get hot in an hour, you don't really get into your body until maybe the last fifteen minutes, sometimes — it takes all that time for the mind to settle, and for the sensitization to actual internal body impulses to come through. I'm a little trapped and degraded by my own egotistical gregariousness, and I've got to figure some way of resolving that and balancing like the immediate crisis demands of the streets with the longer range needs to create an *art,* which will be powerful . . . and holy and socially revolutionary. Partly that's one of the reasons I learned music, to maybe project language farther, in time, also, because there's a possibility that all the machines'll break down, and all the printing presses'll break down, and the only thing that any-

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body'll be able to use is what they can remember — and so maybe just what can be remembered in tune will survive.

INT: Start the second modern oral tradition, I guess.

GINSBERG: Yes. This is specifically what we've been doing — the whole poetry revolution. Williams's whole point was to return to the oral tradition to actual speech, to make it possible to talk again, *for real.* And that led into chanting, in my poetry, and to some extent that led into the minstrel tradition returned, as with Dylan, or that was one of the influences, in that direction — like there's a whole wave of return to individual voice and soul-song, on account of all the mechanical reproduction of dead rhythms and dead images surrounding us.

MILES:[1] What about the Lennon interview? In *Stone?*

GINSBERG: Yeah. I thought that was pretty *raw* and naked — disillusioning — which is what he wanted, and pointing attention back to "concrete particulars." . . . He was too harsh on . . . everybody except his immediate circle that he felt safe with, cause he was generalizing too much about *me,* I felt — there was one little tiny mention — he was talking about himself and Dylan in London, wearing shades and being on dope and about how chaotic a scene it was with Ginsberg and all those other freaks running around. . . . (*Laughter*) You know, I'm sensitive, I don't like to be classed as one of those type of outerpeople in the hideous universe of archetypal . . . busybody nudnicks. . . .

ANDERSON:[1] Well, he didn't come off as one of the most wonderful people in the world.

GINSBERG: He came off as real, except that the *anger* is not real, ultimately that anger isn't real because it isn't observant of what's immediately around. It's still an anger which generalizes and egotizes a little bit — I mean all anger is egotism in a way. Except that he's obviously moved further and further ahead, phase by phase, that it's terrific and enlightening and refreshing to read him. I found myself swept off the table, with the rest of the foreign universe. . . .

INT: You were mentioned in there . . . and in this week's *Voice* too — did you see that article "Outside: Algiers"? What did you think of the way you were handled there, by Cleaver?

GINSBERG: Well, I don't know. I used to turn on to hash with Cleaver years ago. (*Laughter*) I don't know what he's complaining about *me* for. Though he didn't put down hash, he's just putting down

1. Interviewer's note: Also present were Miles, rock editor of *International Times,* a London underground paper, and Jim Anderson, a photographer.

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acid. I think his reason for putting down acid, he said — actually I talked about that before — that you were left vulnerable or left anyone in his situation — with the Pentagon with the map room making Eldridge Cleaver dolls and sticking pins through, figuring on sending out agents to assassinate him (which I'm sure is true) — left him more vulnerable, because acid does make you vulnerable psychically to any influence and also leaves you without defenses which is its advantage and disadvantage. I had thought the Revolutionary Convention in Philadelphia formally accepted acid and grass as instruments of revolution. I think that at this stage they did, that they had done this several months ago. I wonder if that was like a group decision or whether that was Cleaver's reaction to Leary . . . there. That's one question I had. Is this a group community decision — Cleaver's sudden edict. . . .

ANDERSON: Cleaver seems to be in his own head in Algiers.

GINSBERG: That's just one question we might think about. The other is, if it's true that acid or psychedelics make it difficult to have twenty-four hour alertness under extreme murderous stress conditions, then I wonder if the prescription for an hour a day quite safe legal meditation would be found useful for revolutionaries. But the point is: is Cleaver reacting negatively to the type of consciousness that acid catalyzes, in other words, is he reacting negatively to a kind of bum anxiety trip, or is he reacting to a practical political situation — because I think his characterization of it, is that you lie on the grass with your beloved and stick the grass in a book except they don't let you because they come and arrest you for the grass, but he's putting it, both the acid and the grass, in terms of a pleasure kick, rather than a yoga trip or an enlargement of psycho-political consciousness. Whereas I had always thought of acid and the psychedelics as being a variant of yoga and exploration of consciousness, or a medicine, as with the American Indians or the Chama Indians in South America that I spent time with. I think that that mode of psychedelic consciousness is very useful politically and humanly to experience — however you get it, whether you get it through drugs or whether you get it through meditation or whether you get it through universal cosmic accident or whether you get it through death-bed vision or whether you get it through sexual union or whether you get it through revolutionary breakthrough — but it's necessary that everybody have contact with their ultimate nature and with an enlarged consciousness so that they can formulate a legitimate planetary humanly large revolution. So the question is: is that mode of consciousness being rejected,

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or is the convenience of acid and the inconvenience of acid being rejected? I don't know, I just know what I read in the papers. . . . Cleaver's very intelligent, as the interview and his writings show, and thoughtful. He's in a very hideous situation, as we all are, but he's taken on more of it than most people and he's accepted responsibility for starting a government-in-exile which he's trying to defend as a legitimate and structured and viable and long-range thing, so that it can't have any goofing around diplomatically. But it seems to me that any such large decisions as to what the role of acid is in history and consciousness is something that would have to be evolved out of the people. But the question still is if he's rejecting it as a hedonistic thing or as a yoga thing. *I* don't find acid fun. The issue is the usefulness of that modality of consciousness which sees all things as equal and sees even death as a trip equal to other trips. If the revolution can't be built on the oldest tradition of human knowledge understood by every antique tribe on every continent — then what kind of Third World is being articulated when the root lies in neolithic tribal earth-knowledge — including Shamanism, magic dance theater, song from the heart, orgy in community, speech with animals, vision quests and trances, herbs from desert and forest. It's a question of getting back to aboriginal mind, and tribal lore.

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Richard Howard

FROM THE FILES OF THE SECRET POLICE:

Confiscated Material

Better burn this, my dear, should it ever
reach you. Their procedure here
(which accounts, I am sure, for their success)
is to let no one
whisper to the World Outside
the truth about life in these dominions,
or about death, certain deaths . . .
But so tempting was their offer, and so
flattering the terms
that offer was tendered in,
perhaps I accepted precipitantly,
unaware, once my qualms were
quieted, how real the jeopardy was —
you know how I am
when it comes to your comfort!
And though I long to tell you All, of course —
why else would I be writing? —
I see no purpose in paying the price
customarily
exacted for such 'treason';
that, incredibly, is what they label
even the mildest impulse
of a mind to question . . . For my sake, then,
put this in the fire.
What, for instance, became of
that poor devil my predecessor here?
During our lessons, keeping
my voice quite steady, I did manage once
to ask the Princes,

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but I doubt if they ever
so much as wondered: all that the boys know
(for they are boys still, in spite
of the preposterous privileges
they enjoy) is that
he failed, one day, to turn up
for no particular reason, and that by
the following morning's class
he was of course *replaced* — the opposite
of the usual
scholastic situation:
according to their practice in these halls
the pupils are stationary
and the masters succeed one another —
provisionally;
now it is, simply, my turn.
However, this being their festival
season, our lessons today
were suspended, the Court, like all the rest,
eagerly taking
part in their terrible Games
(as they call them), and even from this far
away — holed up in an odd
corner: no one would think to find me here —
I can tell the cries
of the victims (not the ones
under the knife, but those waiting to go)
from the continuous roar
of the 'players,' my dear, who have not yet
had their fill of blood.
Without, therefore, my functions
to attend to, and the Princes attending
to *theirs,* it seemed the one time,
or never, to pry beyond these precincts
apportioned to me.
So this morning, at the mere
start of their madness, I left my lodgings
(too near the noise, anyway,

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to be tolerable) and walked, unobserved,
past the ancient gates
of one of their Sacred Places,
the echoing courts quite empty today —
'today is for Sacred *Acts,*'
they would say, cutting down the next captive —
and saw there a thing
worth the risk of this message.
It must have been used a hundred times, yet
ready to serve all over
again, waiting in that abandoned shrine
for its one moment.
I looked at it a long time.
A proper account and you should conceive
what these people are, beyond
all their talk of 'Royal Tutor and Scribe' —
as if my duties
and my performance of them
somehow made what is happening right now
in the arena less real
or even less repellent. But there is more —
if I make you see
the necessary *beauty*
of the . . . beast, as well as its brute nature,
you will realize, perhaps,
why I remain here despite the dreadful
danger to us both —
not for gain alone, but grateful
to some long-lost savagery my life had lacked.
Try to see, to imagine,
then, a Pig longer than a man, a woven
hull of bulrushes
plastered over in long stripes,
grey, flesh-pink, ochre. Cowrie-shells for eyes,
tusks of ivory curving
back to the tufted ears which, like the tail,
are worked from inside,
their 'practitioner' concealed

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by a thick fringe of black straw. In the snout
an obscene balsa-wood tongue,
and under its tail-whisk the testicles
(two nutshells) neatly
stowed, and the man inside it
becomes, when he stands, the missing member —
dismembered now, while they are
at their killing, remembered later on
when the rites begin
and such 'Pigs' devour the dead,
the great hulls squatting down on one body
after another — can you
credit me when I not only assert
but insist there is
a reason in their ravening,
in their seasonal glut a loveliness,
my dear, for all its horror?
You are the first, and by that primacy
imperiled, to hear
of these gory sacraments —
scarcely believable, yet they are so.
Do not condemn too quickly
what I shall try to explain in my next.
Meanwhile memorize
these notes I dare not preserve,
for even now a stillness from the stadium
means I must stop. Pay
our 'messenger' well and, as you love me,
destroy this. I shall
return now to my Princes,
though our next few sessions promise to be
unruly. I am quite well
and safe, so far. Next summer we may . . . not . . .

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DOCUMENTS

L'EDUCATION SENTIMENTALE

Destroy the University

1. The university cannot function; it must therefore be prevented from functioning so that this incapacity may become clear. No reform of any kind can make this institution viable; we must therefore combat reforms (their practical effects as well as their theoretical justifications) not because they are dangerous but because they are illusory. The crisis of the institution of the university, as we shall see, goes beyond the realm of the university and includes the social and technical division of labor in its entirety; this crisis must therefore break out.

The moment and the method of bringing this about are subject to discussion. They are more or less satisfactory. But discussion and criticism can be valuably carried on only by those who recognize that it is necessary to reject reformism in every area.

2. The origin of the crisis of the university, in France, can be found in the early sixties in the Fouchet reforms. When the majority of an age group tends to compete for the *baccalauréat,* and when the majority of successful candidates tends to enter the university, the mechanisms of social selection established by the bourgeoisie are under strong attack; its ideology and its institutions are in crisis.

The ideology of the educational system is *equality of opportunity for social advancement* by means of education. This equality, as Bourdieu and Passeron have demonstrated, has always been fictitious. Nevertheless, the mechanisms and the criteria of student selection were, in the past, "objective" enough so that their class character and their arbitrariness were masked: one was eliminated or accepted on the basis of a group of "aptitudes" and "skills" defined once and for all. Traditionally, the left fought not against the class criteria of selection —

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which would have forced it to fight against selection itself and against the educational system in its entirety — but for the right of everybody to enter the selecting machine.

The contradictory character of this demand remained masked as long as the right was theoretically granted to everyone, but the practical possibility of using that right was denied to the great majority. However, from the moment when, with the help of the spread of knowledge, the majority approaches the acquisition of the practical possibility of using a theoretical right, the contradiction surfaces: if the majority has access to higher education, that education loses its selective character. The right to education and the right to social advancement can no longer go hand in hand: if, hypothetically, everyone can in fact be educated, not everyone can in fact be elevated to a privileged position. Once the mechanisms of student selection have been subjected to attack, society will attempt either to establish complementary mechanisms or to limit the right to an education by administrative measures.

3. These administrative limitations — *numerus clausus,* entrance examinations for the university — are such delicate political issues that the successive governments of the Fifth Republic never instituted them. In fact, the limitation *ex ante* of the number of students is an open, brutal negation of a juridical principle and of a social fiction; that is, that the *opportunity* for social advancement by means of education is equal for everyone and that the *possibility* of being educated is only limited by the *aptitude* for study.

To destroy this juridical fiction is to expose the illusory character of bourgeois liberties, and is, above all, to challenge head on in the name of technocratic rationality — education is expensive and it's not profitable when graduates cannot be "elevated" — the middle classes (so-called) whose support the capitalist regime can conserve only by holding out prospects of "social elevation" limited by merit alone. *Numerus clausus,* preselection, university entrance examinations, by destroying the illusions of meritocratic ideology, would set up the middle classes against the capitalist state and would reveal to them their condition as a social fate: they are made up not of *potential bourgeois* whom the chances of birth and fortune have prevented from becoming real bourgeois, but of an infantry of hard-up types and subordinate workers destined to serve the bourgeoisie, not to equal it.

Politically — and that is the meaning of the Faure reform — the bourgeoisie must therefore maintain the fiction of the opportunity for social advancement open to everyone through free access to education. However, it is reality that now takes on the burden of showing up that

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fiction: access to education is free, but education leads to nothing. The number of graduates devalues the degree. Many are called but few are chosen: positions are rare. The numerical reduction that student selection is not able to accomplish will be accomplished by selection in hiring.

While waiting for the "force of circumstances" to be understood — that is, that parents push their children into "good" professional schools (yet to be created), which will give them access to "good" jobs, rather than into the university from which they will graduate to unemployment — the state is keeping the university open, but gradually reducing the value of the degrees it grants (for example, Vincennes). In short, they're giving the university enough rope so that in the end, they hope, it will hang itself. Meanwhile, they send the cops into the schools so that, by fomenting disorder, the schools' lack of value can be established.

4. These contradictions of the bourgeois university lead us to some fundamental contradictions:

a. The economic value granted degrees until now depended upon their scarcity and on the scarcity of the aptitude for higher education. If this aptitude becomes widespread, the value of the degree must logically disappear, and with it, the hierarchical division of labor.

b. If the aptitude for higher education — certified or not by a degree — tends to become widespread, it can no longer serve as a criterion of selection: social stratification can no longer claim to be based on skill and merit. The right to higher education and the right to advancement can no longer go hand in hand.

c. If education no longer guarantees advancement, one of two things is true: either it is considered a waste of time and a useless social cost, because it is profitable neither for the students nor for capitalist society; or it is considered as a general, non-utilitarian training whose luxury society can after all afford. But, in that case, the affirmation of the inalienable right to an education has as its corollary the fact that that education, which leads to no career, must possess for the students — who will later become functionaries, workers or what have you — an *intrinsic interest*.

It is at this point that the contradiction of the university breaks into the open. Against the system of selection, the student movement asserted the inalienable right to education. The logic of that demand (which remained petit bourgeois as a defense of opportunities for ad-

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vancement for everyone) led the movement to antihierarchical and egalitarian positions: in order for everyone to have the right to an education, that education, no longer a class privilege, must no longer confer the right to any kind of privilege. Holders of higher degrees would have to accept working with their hands, which led to the questioning and rejection of the social division of labor, of the technical division of labor which is modeled on it and of any hierarchical structure of work.

But it was impossible to stop there, for from the moment one accepts the proposition that education does not lead to a career, one has to redefine the nature of education, its content and its meaning: since it does not confer a "useful culture," it must confer a "rebel culture"; since it does not correspond to a demand of society, it must respond to the demand of the students who intend to destroy that society and its division of labor.

Now, the university is by nature incapable of responding to that demand: it is functional neither in relation to the demands of the capitalist economy nor in relation to the demands of those who want to overthrow capitalism; it dispenses neither a "useful culture" nor a "rebel culture" (which, by definition, is not dispensed); it dispenses a *university culture,* that it to say, knowledge *separated* from any productive or militant practice. In short, it is a place where one can pass one's time in neither a useful nor an interesting way. No type of reform can change this situation. There can therefore be no question of reforming the university, but only of destroying it to destroy both the culture separated from the people that it incarnates (mandarin culture) and the social stratification whose instrument, in spite of everything, it remains.

5. Such are the facts that guerrilla warfare in the university illuminates; it shortens the agony of a moribund institution and reveals the hyprocrisy of the bodies that defend it. Do you object that the leftist students will be able neither to put something else in its place nor to change society so that that something else may be viable? That's obvious: the students can, by themselves, neither produce another culture nor make the revolution. What they can do, however, is to prevent the acute crisis of bourgeois institutions, of the division of labor and of the selection of "elites," from being masked. That is what they are doing (and it is what all partisans of order — of this order or another, just as authoritarian and hierarchical — criticize them for). Alone they can go no further: destruction and even challenge that are *effective* (and no longer only ideological) against the division of labor cannot be carried on in universities; they can only be carried on in factories and businesses. They presuppose the critical analysis of a productive or-

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ganization whose apparent technical rationality is both the objectification and the mask of a political rationality — of a technique of domination. This challenge presupposes a practical knowledge of the process of production and of business organization in order to change it, to place it under the control of the "associated producers," to replace hierarchical division with voluntary division of labor.

It is only on the basis of this effective critique of the division of labor that the critique of an education which directly (in technical or professional schools) or indirectly trains the managers, the operators and those who are left by the wayside in capitalist production, can in its turn become effective. The destruction of the university and of class-based education is therefore not the concern exclusively of the students; it is the concern, especially, of the working class, if capitalist division of labor, of which school is the matrix, is to be overcome.

The crisis of the university and the workers' revolt against the despotism of the factory lend to this question an immediate reality. And if the conjunction of these two aspects of the same crisis — the crisis of the division of labor — does not issue in an effective alliance of students and workers and in a reciprocal critique of methods of training and of domination, the fault does not lie with the student movement; it falls upon the traditional organizations of the working class who are doing everything possible to maintain students in the university ghetto in order to better control workers' demands. If the necessary violence of the student struggle then tends to wear itself out in symbolic insurrections in the isolated arena of the university, it is not because of some perverse taste for meaningless violence; it is because violence alone is able to break down, if only temporarily, the encirclement of the university ghetto and to pose a problem whose existence reformists of every description prefer to ignore. This problem — the crisis of bourgeois institutions and ideology and of the division of labor — is a political problem *par excellence*. It is not enough for political parties to reject any significance and any political translation of student violence for that violence to become an expression of vandalism; it is political violence, politically necessary, if not sufficient.

Andre Gorz

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Save the University

Must the university be destroyed? Yes, André Gorz has just asserted in a provocative article, because it is not in a position to function.

According to him, for almost ten years the contradiction has been clear between the vocation of the bourgeois university to perpetuate this society by the selection of elites and the rapidly growing number of adolescents who wish to acquire either high culture or degrees guaranteeing "social advancement." The result: degrees, devalued by the "inflation" of the number of graduates, can no longer play their role of placement certificates, while the kind of culture dispensed, not functional enough from the point of view of employers, also lacks *intrinsic* interest for students, and therefore no longer satisfies anyone. Student insurrection, according to Gorz, is therefore reasonable and legitimate, even though it can only be effective if it becomes part of a general movement, with the working class as protagonist, which confronts the fundamental problem: no longer the "democratization" of the university's selection of elites, but the questioning of the social division of labor, that is to say, of all "elitism."

This position has a good deal of strength; it could find further arguments in the exciting and systematic book by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron [*La Reproduction: Eléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement,* Editions de Minuit, 1970]. For these two sociologists, any pedagogical activity inside an organized educational system perpetrates "symbolic violence" which plays the role of maintaining the existing social and cultural order, all the more effectively because this role is unconscious and because it develops under the illusion of the university's autonomy from the surrounding society.

It is easy to deduce from this that equal access for everyone to culture — in other words the democratization of education — is a typically bourgeois objective; further, an illusion that camouflages and protects social stratification and the social division of labor because it promotes a certain number of exemplary individual successes, which are, however, necessarily exceptional. The worker who becomes a boss, the son of a peasant who becomes a university professor, are arguments used to justify, and therefore maintain, in the name of an illusory social mobility limited to a few specimens, the existing social stratification and organization of labor. For my part, I am convinced of it.

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But we have to go further and ask why this hypocritical process is so easily accepted by its victims, that is to say, the working classes. Is it only, as has been suggested, because of the cleverness of the camouflage? Could it not also be because of the other, positive, function the university serves, specifically its scientific work? Just as the capitalist system, based on profit, nevertheless accomplishes the positive task of the development of productive forces, so the university, based on selection and the maintenance of the existing order, nevertheless plays the necessary role of the development and diffusion of knowledge.

At this point we must ask the question: can we take the risk of "destroying the university" in the hope that the rest will be given to us besides? Of course, you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. On the condition that you break them in the pan and not in the basket. It is not by breaking machines that you will abolish capitalism; the workers have known that for a long time. Nor is it by destroying the university that you will abolish social inequalities. It is hardly probable that this radical destruction would lead us to greater justice, but it is certain that it would lead us to a catastrophic economic and cultural regression. We must always keep in mind this fact: *in spite of its relative backwardness, France has gone too far on the road of industrialization to permit us to make underdevelopment a path to socialism.* Besides, the masses would never accept it. Under these conditions, the destruction of the university, even with the best intentions in the world, is an equivocal and at the same time dangerous objective.

Then what is to be done? The Faure law is a reformist framework, to which a majority of professors and a minority of students want to give a conservative content, while a majority of students and a minority of professors upon whom its chances for success rested ignore it in the name of their revolutionary ideal. That is why it is running badly. It is becoming clear today that, following the national inclination, attention was directed almost exclusively to the institutional reform of the university and its internal division of power when the most acute problem was and remains the ultimate purpose of higher education. If, as André Gorz correctly thinks, we have to call in question the social division of labor, the university must not be destroyed but turned toward that objective. Which presupposes:

1. *The Abolition of Student Status.* The existence of the university ghetto is an alibi not only for conservative professors, but also for protesting students. As they are now organized, in a perfectly abstract, closed countersociety, they reproduce, in their sphere, the professional clerisy, with no grip on the social reality they intend to trans-

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form. Their general revolutionary culture is as distant from reality, as little operative, as the general bourgeois culture they denounce. The lengthening of the time spent in school, combined with the growth of the number of students, has made the university a magic circle within which masses of the young are concentrated, artificially maintained in the state of prolonged minors. Left without responsibilities, they become irresponsible.

Let's not disguise the fact: two years ago, it was their situation in a waking dream that enabled them to shake off the false consciousness, the deceptive constraints, in which French society had fallen asleep — a historic moment, a moment that has passed. Utopia has lost its desanctifying force: nonconformity has lost its scandalous quality. The hardest thing remains to be done: to participate in real struggles. The time is past when the intellectuals could, from the outside, bring "class consciousness" to the laboring masses; from now on it is only from inside society that social criticism can arise.

That is why, rather than destroying the university, the revolutionary students should struggle to dissociate it from the two permanent bodies that monopolize it: students and professors. To put an end to the chronological dissociation between student life and active life is to permit social experience to penetrate the domain of study, to permit social criticism to penetrate the domain of life.

We would therefore have to envisage, beginning now, a new course of study in which, after a necessary period of full-time instruction concentrated especially on the acquisition of basic languages (French, foreign languages, mathematics, the arts), instruction would overlap with active life. This mixed period should itself be on a sliding scale: at the beginning, time devoted to instruction should be preponderant and only diminish progressively, without ever disappearing. From now on, school and university training at the beginning of life should no longer be considered anything but a particular form of permanent training.

Let us add that this drastic transformation of the student condition is also justified on pedagogic grounds by the difficulty, which increases with age, of acquiring knowledge out of simple natural curiosity, without precise motivation, without a definite objective. It is the concrete experience of his lacunae in the course of work or research which leads anyone to constitute for himself a more coherent and deeper culture.

I will no doubt be accused of proposing the "professionalization" of the university — while it's a question of exactly the opposite — on

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the pretext that a certain fraction of the ruling classes could be attracted by such proposals. But you have to make a choice: no matter what position you adopt on the subject of education, you will always have compromising allies. I am in any case convinced that as long as *the act of studying* is confined to a certain age group, it will also be confined to a certain social class.

2. *The Abolition of the Teaching Profession.* The reasons that have led us to demand the abolition of student status lead us to demand, in parallel fashion, the abolition of the teaching profession, at least in higher education. The role of social critic cannot be valuably held by a regulated group at a distance from society. All instruction should come from science and/or experience, and not from a social investiture as much a mystification for the one who receives it as for others. One can only really teach what one has known and experienced. This real knowledge can be of a speculative (research) or a practical (professional and social activity) order; for, if we proceed otherwise, if we conceive of formal education as the necessary and qualified mediator of an entire intellectual field, teaching can only be ***repetition***[1] given over to the policing of university apprenticeship, whose language is nothing but the shortest road from the professor's textbook to the student's mind.

Besides, once all the tasks of instruction in society are no longer carried on by professional educators, we can wonder if those educators can reasonably continue to consider themselves as a monopoly corporation. Their claim to possess and distribute the totality of knowledge is challenged by everyone's daily experience. Therefore, every teacher must accept for himself the necessity to look for his knowledge *elsewhere,* and that for that purpose *he must do something else.* From that point on, the teaching profession is no longer anything but a particular form of the teaching function which is incumbent upon the whole of society; the proclamation of the right for everyone to study according to his needs and to teach according to his capacities is the chief means at our command, thanks to the struggle inside and outside the university, to abolish the social curse that weighs upon manual labor and to progressively abolish the social division of labor.

Jacques Julliard

(*Translated from the French by George Holoch*)

1. Translator's note: Pun in French on ***répétiteur:*** tutor.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE LITERATURNAJA GASETA

In the newspaper of the Soviet writers association of March 31, 1970, you turn against my play, *Trotsky in Exile*.[1] You accuse me of historical distortion, use of false documents and of falsification of the Great Socialist October Revolution.

To be sure my account of the Revolution and of Lenin's fighting comrades does not correspond to the picture as it has been drawn in the Soviet Union for more than four decades. Indeed, the play is an attack directed against this picture, for I proceed from a different reality than the one that determined the picture as valid for socialism.

Although, from your point of view, my play can be evaluated as being provocative, one ought to be able to expect of you that you are more familiar with the background of the onesided drawing of the Soviet image of Trotsky. The documentation of Marxist historical research are all too numerous, the works of the people in question, the documents and protocols about the true circumstances, speak a sufficiently clear language so that they could be denied in any serious discussion.

Even if you were to take the position that the time has not yet come to uncover the truth about an incisive epoch, and that in the intensified battle against imperialism certain simplifications must be retained for propaganda purposes, one would still assume an understanding of the fact that my work is not a falsification but an attempt at restoring just historical proportions.

It would then be possible to argue to what extent such a play can be of service to present socialist interests or might be exploited by anti–Soviet forces. Already Marx in his preface to *The 18th Brumaire*, and after him Lenin again and again, pointed to the fact that the hiding of weaknesses and conflicts is never in the best interests of socialism, and that only their disclosure and analysis will strengthen it. All along unsparing criticism of all mistakes in one's own camp has been the main law of the workers' movement.

1. This piece was written in response to an article by Lew Ginsberg. *Trotsky in Exile* was first put on in Germany in 1969, and *PR* published parts of the play for the first time in America (No. 1, 1971). *An Open Letter to the Literaturnaja Gaseta* is reprinted with permission of Suhrkamp Verlag. Copyright © 1971 by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main.

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For this reason I have placed the demand for finding the truth above party political considerations informed by present conditions.

Moreover, the argument that claims that the bourgeois world could use Trotsky and the thoughts he proclaimed as a weapon against socialism is untenable. No goals can be found in his work that would argue an advantage for the bourgeoisie. Whenever he attacked communist parties, he did so in order to accuse them of not fighting capitalism and fascism effectively and strongly enough. His criticism of the socialist state was directed against its bureaucratic deformations; he demanded the return to revolutionary traditions. And to his very end — often in contradistinction to his followers — he combined his polemic, his suggestions, with the appeal for the necessity of solidarity with the First Workers' State.

That his writings as well as biographies of him can only be found in Western countries has nothing to do with him, but with those who attempted to push him off by force into the camp of the enemy and who struck his name from the annals of the revolution.

Thirty years after his death what is it that represents Trotsky? Which dangers can be associated with him that could account for a taboo, unique in history, that is attached to his name in socialist countries, and for his activities being surrounded by an obscuring process incompatible with dialectical materialism?

Quite obviously and above all it is his perspective of the permanent revolution, his advocacy of a never-ending war of liberation on all continents, from which the slander and brandishing of his person can be derived. And beneath that, working on continuously, is his break with Stalin, when he declared his internationalist anathema in opposition to the principle of socialist construction in one country.

Even if we are of the opinion that in view of the capitalist encirclement at the time Stalin's solution was inescapable, we cannot help but recognize the disproportionate discrepancy between the infamous image of Trotsky created by Stalin and Trotsky's actual ideas, guidelines and prognoses.

In 1970, when life in socialist countries takes place under the sign of Lenin's one hundredth birthday the fight against Trotsky also reaches a new height. The caricature of him that in the meantime may even have become threadbare for quite a number of socialists is being revived and actualized with great efforts. It is not an accident that the honoring of Lenin that is now reaching cultic dimensions coincides with a compact condemnation of Trotsky. In the fight about the accurate interpretation of Marxism-Leninism Trotsky offers sufficient

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material to serve as a scapegoat for the most various phenomena that contradict the directives of the soviet party.

Thus in "The struggle of the Bolshevist party against Trotskyism in the Post-October-period," a publication of the Academy for the Social Sciences in the CC of the CPSU, the connections between trotskyist thoughts and those of the "Mao Tse-tung group" is emphasized. The militarization of the Chinese Party and State system, the preparations for war — as the best means for bringing about the world revolution — is traced back to Trotsky's methods. Here too the still unresolved events play a role that contributed to Trotsky's banning and expulsion from the Soviet Union when he advocated the support of Chinese revolutionaries and took sides against Stalin and the Comintern who preferred a pact with Chiang Kai-shek and permitted the slaughtering of workers in the cities.

When he, like Lenin, set his hopes upon the revolution in China, when he — also here in agreement with leninist ideas — saw the possibility of the victory of socialism only in the flaming up of the revolution on all continents — the conditions for it, however, had not yet been created during his lifetime—or better: they remained largely unexploited, then we find ourselves in the present amidst a burgeoning of forces that both revolutionaries worked to bring about.

What is not being taken into consideration and what ought to interest the students of socialist countries is an examination of the historical circumstances that led to Trotsky's propositions and political decisions, as well as, for instance, of the questions under which circumstances his viewpoint of the militarization of work during the last stage of war communism gave way to another insight—namely of the necessity for the participation of workers councils in politics and the economy on the broadest scale.

To determine Trotsky's influence upon the guerrilla activities in Bolivia, Chile or Brazil can do honor to Trotsky only to the extent that he would never have opposed these forces, that he would have dismissed them as premature here, as mistaken there, and that he would have discredited their strategy and exposed their leadership. The development that was initiated here as well as in China through the change in revolutionary emphasis to the countryside was only recognized by him during the last part of his life. For him a revolution that was carried from the countryside into the cities did not possess any convincing force: over and over again he characterized the urban proletariat, the enlightened organized working class, as the initiator of the revolution.

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The May 1968 revolution of workers and students in Paris is called in this book a revolt of "anarchist adventurism," provoked by "trotskyist-maoist inflammatory watchwords." With this, the great event of the last years — namely that a revolutionary situation can develop in a highly industrialized country — has been badly distorted. The anarchist tendencies in this context cannot affect Trotsky, who opposed anarchy and individual terror. It would be much more informative to provide a description of the actual power relations and of the intentions behind the revolt, as well as an explanation of its being repressed and quashed.

So far as the reference to trotskyist groups within the Czechoslovakian reform movement is concerned, this is in harmony with the attempt to establish a workers' democracy and an open cultural policy. These are also traits that Trotsky has in common with the "left radicalism" of the Italian communists. What is relevant to us here, however, and what can never be clarified by global rejection, is the question which way Trotsky's alternatives transformed themselves after the period of the stalinist cult of personality, which of these still continue to work on today, after the victory of the revolution in Vietnam, in China, Korea and Cuba and after the beginning of a war of liberation in Africa and Latin America, which of these have found novel and definite forms and what is still useful and necessary under certain conditions.

When in this book Trotskyism is described as the mouthpiece of blind forces, as representing the position contrary to the principle of peaceful coexistence, when Trotsky is adduced as the common denominator for the existing explosive forces everywhere, then this can only emphasize that problems are hidden behind such an unscientific construction and that one shies away from tackling them.

Peter Weiss

(*Translated from the German by Gertrud Lenzer*)

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CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

A pneumatic cannon that fires dead chickens at speeds of up to 620 mph has been developed by the National Research Council of Canada (*Chemical & Engineering News,* November 2). The new gun is designed to handle synthetic birds as well. The cannon . . . is used in testing airplane parts likely to be struck by birds. The cannon can easily accommodate the four-pound bird, which is the international standard for testing windshields, as well as the eight-pound bird recently adopted by the Federal Aviation Administration as the standard test for tail assemblies.
(*Environment,* Jan/Feb 1971.) Contributed by Jay Martin Poole, Seattle, Washington.

OIL: Moscow — Oil industry expert says Moses and Joshua were among earth's original polluters, criticizes regulations inhibiting inventiveness and progress.
(Greencastle, Indiana *Banner-Graphic,* June 19, 1971.) Contributed by Mrs. Clem C. Williams, Jr., Greencastle, Indiana.

FDA CALLS HEARING ON SALES OF POISON AS TENDERIZER

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has called a hearing into the sales of a deadly poison mistakenly labeled as a meat tenderizer.

And, after the death of a Maryland man last Sunday, the FDA renewed Friday its public warning first issued last November that housewives, restaurants and bars throw away any packages of tenderizer labeled "Spice of Life."
(*Denver Post,* March 21, 1971.) Contributed by John Ruppe, Laramie, Wyoming.

In part, the persistence of the label may be due to this compulsive itch to pigeonhole: just as we think "serious" essayists are ones who do those long, boring mosaics of double-talk for magazines like the *Partisan Review* (or the *Encounter* of some years ago, which turned out to have been spawned by the C.I.A. — so much for the going price for pundits).
(*Esquire,* July 1971.) Contributed by Madeline Kirsch, Laurelton, Long Island.

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STERILIZATION PROGRAM FOR MEN
IN INDIAN TOWN IS BEARING FRUIT

ERNAKULAN, India — More than 26,000 men have been sterilized here since July 1 in the first half of a month-long family planning festival, the largest ever held in India.

"We hope to sterilize 50,000 by the end of the month," a family planning official said recently.

Ninety doctors working in two shifts were performing the vasectomies in 50 operating cubicles set up on the floor of the auditorium of the town hall here, with operations beginning at 9 a.m. and, on occasion, going on as late as 2 a.m.

Hundreds of men, some from as far as 150 miles away, stepped up for the 10-minute operation in the carnival-like atmosphere of huge tents set up on the town hall lawn.

After the operation, each patient received gifts worth 110 rupees, including 25 rupees in cash. The gifts included a free lottery ticket, a gaily colored dress sari for the man's wife, three kilos of rice, a chit for a week's rations, an umbrella or dhoti garment for the man himself and a flight bag or plastic bucket to carry it all home in.

Each man volunteering for sterilization must certify that he is married and declare how many children he has. If he has only one, he is rejected and advised to use other methods of birth control. Such has been the appeal of the festival's gift package that the doctors have had to turn down hundreds of men who were senile.
(*Boston Globe,* July 19, 1971.)

HEADLINERS

ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY HAS 'TOO MUCH
WORK' TO GO CRUSADING
(*New York Times,* May 27, 1970.)

INTERSTATES BRING CRIME TO UPPER VALLEY
(*Connecticut Valley Reporter,* June 16, 1971.)

POISONOUS CHEMICAL DUMPED IN HUDSON;
WATER CALLED SAFE
(*New York Times,* April 11, 1971.)
Contributed by William Mather Boardman, Woodstock, New York.

EDITORS' NOTE: We'd like to remind our readers that they are invited to send in examples of nonsense. A free subscription to PR will be awarded for each contribution used. In case of a tie, single copies will be sent to the latecomers.

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BOOKS

THE SPORTING GRIPE

OUT OF THEIR LEAGUE. By Dave Meggysey. Simon and Schuster. $6.95.
BALL FOUR. By Jim Bouton. World Publishing Co. $7.95.

> I've come to see that football is one of the most dehumanizing experiences a person can face . . . the racism and fraud, the unbelievable brutality that affects mind as much as body. To me, it is no accident that Richard Nixon, the most repressive President in American history, is a football freak, and that the sport is rapidly becoming our version of bread and circuses.—DAVE MEGGYSEY
>
> I believe that sport, all sport, is one of the few bits of glue that holds our society together, one of the few activities where young people can proceed along traditional avenues, where objectives are clear, where the desire to win is not only permissible but encouraged and, conversely, where a man can learn how to lose without being destroyed by the experience.[1]—SPIRO T. AGNEW
>
> You can always be a teacher or a social worker when you've reached thirty-five.—JIM BOUTON

In politics opposites guide, sustain and even comfort each other, and it's no great surprise to find Dave Meggysey and Spiro Agnew agreeing on what "sport" means, though not on what it does to people. For them both sport represents society as it is or (for Agnew) ought to be. Agnew might have written the scenario for Meggysey's career, the poor Hungarian boy finding social identity as a high school and college football star and going on to modest success as a professional linebacker; and Meggysey's decision to quit, just as some of the recognition and money he'd worked so hard for started coming in, was a deliberate rejection of the "system" Agnew finds sport upholding.

In theory, of course, they're right — any collective human activity within a society in some way reflects the political structures that exist there. Yet neither man says much about my own relation to sport. Though athletics may well be good for young people, morally as well

1. *Sports Illustrated,* June 21, 1971.

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as physically, I can't pretend that my character or patriotic sense now benefits much from playing or watching. I hate to lose, personally or vicariously; some of my meanest and socially least useful emotions are aroused by games, to say nothing of the time lost for useful work or decent sociability. As citizen, parent and workman, I would be better off not liking sport at all. But while my life is a betrayal of what Agnew and my old P.E. teachers hoped for from me, it doesn't live up to Meggysey's terms either — being a football fan doesn't really seem to have made me a napalm fan, a racism fan, a law-and-order fan.

Meggysey's conversion to the counterculture began, he explains, when he seriously injured an opponent, but it's a longer step between physical fierceness and "racism and fraud" than he allows. Blocks and tackles as such aren't racist or fraudulent, and the gentler sports are no cleaner than football in these respects. Like other sports, football is racist because the players, coaches and owners have the prejudices of their class and background; it is fraudulent, in the sense Meggysey intends, because the men who run it for profit are at best no more altruistic and socially responsive than most businessmen; it is violent and subjectively brutal because it is football.

Out of Their League records an admirable growth of political awareness and conscience in an unexpected place, but its metaphors are too easy. The trouble with Nixon isn't that he watches football but that he makes such an obvious and cheap political gesture of it, companionably winking to the Silent Majority while the Peace Freaks parade outside. (If only one could believe that he does like football, that he can enjoy it or anything else innocently and directly, without the nervous eyes searching about for the camera as the No. 3 Smile clicks into position! If lawn bowling or ballet were as popular as football, he'd watch.) As it is, the resemblances of football to war, which polo, arm-wrestling and shuffleboard in their own ways have too, lure Meggysey into a neat and conclusive connection-making that's the mark of soft thinking. To see politics everywhere is one thing, probably a salutary thing on the whole, but to see it there at the expense of the particular and obvious qualities of the object observed — to treat experience merely as an allegory of one's political hopes or fears — is dangerous, impoverishing nonsense, all the more so for not being confined to ex-linebackers.

If Dave Meggysey is a political moralist, a True Believer with the enthusiastic flush of revelation still upon him, Jim Bouton is something else, something more recognizably in the American Grain of sport and its myths. To be sure, *Ball Four* operates as antimyth, with

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its grinning exposure of the boozing, pill-popping and sexual silliness of baseball players, the stupidity and greed of coaches and front-office people. Bouton is the Thersites of our epic sport, but like Thersites he counts on our prior veneration of the epic values, and he himself figures as the debunker who is both partly right and, because of his own incapacity, somehow not to be trusted. Scandalous revelations about demigods like Mantle, Yastrzemski, Crosetti, Maglie and Berra, even if true, mean less than they otherwise might in the mouth of a sore-armed knuckleballer, struggling through what turned out to be his last full season in the game.

Bouton himself, for all his incidental sympathy for hippies, protest and racial justice, is no radical but a screwball, a comic, a show-off. If he'd been a little less smart and sophisticated and his arm had held up, he might even have entered the pantheon himself, as the latest in the great line of Rube Waddell, Bugs Raymond, Babe Herman, Dizzy Dean and Bobo Newsom. Those nicknames of course cry out for an Empson to come and read them — the "country" eccentric with irrepressible natural gifts is a prime type in baseball legend, the sign, I suppose, of its rural, folkish origins and its proletarian appeal once urbanized. (Our other major sports were developed mainly by college boys or rich men in private clubs.) In our version of pastoral, the baseball player may properly be as much clown as hero. But they only called Bouton "Jim" — his ironies are too knowing to seem Empsonianly clownish, and his satire stumbles over our (and his) sense of his failing prowess, the essentially defensive malice that's overt in the title of his feeble, synthetic second book, *I'm Glad You Didn't Take It Personally.*

Bouton's indifference to what baseball "expresses" so long as it's amusing and pays well preserves him from sociopolitical pomposities, but he avoids hyperseriousness only by accepting — so as to invert — the gossipy "personalization" most American sportswriting substitutes for the analysis of performance it's too ignorant to attempt. (Compare soccer reporting in many European newspapers or bullfight criticism in Spain.) What Mickey Mantle is Really Like has little to do with what one saw in his great years. While fantasy is deeply involved in looking at sports, even the most simpleminded fan doesn't merely idealize the players so as to "identify" with their virtuous skill. As with movie stars or politicians, their glamor is partly in our sense that they are privileged, that some naughtiness may even be necessary if their privacy is to be as rich and luxurious as we hope it is. We don't, after all, give them fame and money just to live like *we* do.

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An interest in sport undoubtedly involves an element of wish–fulfillment — as fans we're surely trying to sustain connection with childhood, after most other connections have worn pretty thin. But the fantasy enacted has its own terms, various and sometimes fairly complicated ones. Meggysey's equation of Nixon as football watcher with Nixon as Cold War Commissar is less interesting and plausible than (for example) William Phillips's idea that for intellectuals sport, especially football, offers a "respectable" form of the primitive aggressiveness ("violence, patriotism, manhood") that even thinking men remain secretly fascinated with.[2] (Phillips's emphasis on how team loyalties reflect the fan's attachments to his city or community seems to me excessive; John Lindsay may have picked up a few votes when the Mets won the Series a few weeks before the 1969 election, but even in New York the serious fan is less innocently chauvinistic than that. Think by comparison of soccer fans in Italy, Latin America or Glasgow, for whom winning or losing is sometimes quite literally a matter of life or death.) Yet Phillips also shows the limitations of seeing sport as war by going on to talk, not like a natural man appeasing his blood-lust in Yankee Stadium, but like a would-be coach, for whom the display of force leads to "professional" assessments of particular players, plays and strategies. For the serious spectator, who knows what he's watching, vicarious participation in the physical acts is subordinate to imagined *direction* of the whole intricate show, a kind of fantasy that's less embarrassing and more fun for grown-ups.

For the audience, even those who respond strongly to violence and competition, sport is a form of art. We can't simply project ourselves into the players — their experience is quite unimaginable verbally or imagistically — but we can feel something of what it would be like to manage and conduct it all, determine the tactics and deploy the personnel. If these are the terms of warfare, it's war refined and formalized into the mood of campaign maps and military histories; without actually *doing* anything one feels the intellectual and aesthetic consequences of effective choices among the means available. At this level of disinterest (for all its dangers) sport and war are indeed related, but only through their affinities with other arts, which give pleasure by allowing us imagined participation in the discovery and disposition of means that made the work, the performance, be just as it is.

Such a claim is pompous if it aims at dignifying sport by associating

2. William Phillips, "A Season in the Stands," *Commentary*, July 1969, pp. 65-69.

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with something better, "art." To be worth the time of intelligent people sport doesn't need that kind of validation — as a fan, I can only sneer at someone who wants to turn a great football or basketball game into listening to Mozart or looking at Cezannes. Besides its obvious preciousness and confusion of realms, that impulse would spoil another powerful strain of fantasy in American sports-watching, one's feeling that it's a "classless" diversion whose appeal isn't restricted by how one has defined oneself in the terms of taste, background, occupation or intelligence. (This may be peculiarly American, or at least colonial. In England and some Continental countries an attachment to a particular sport — cricket or tennis vs. soccer or cycling, Rugby vs. Rugby League, etc. — usually reflects class identity or pretensions thereto. But this is surely a historical phenomenon, not evidence that the formal or stylistic nature of a given sport has social significance — compare the radically different class appeal and atmosphere of "structurally" similar games like baseball and cricket.) A baseball game isn't "classical," "popular," "folk" or "rock," it's just baseball, good or bad; though to think too much about it is to turn into Nixon, I do somehow suppose that by going to Madison Square Garden or turning on the TV I enlarge my "social" identity as I can't with most other kinds of art.

But the difficulty is in the word "art," with its lingering elitist resonances, not in any absurdity about attaching to sport some of the interest and value we attach to literature, music, painting or drama. Those who are already comfortable with an idea of art that takes in good journalism, pop music, film, commercial design, advertising and so forth, should have no trouble here. (Here I'm drawing on Richard Poirier's instructive view of "popular" art as advanced in "Learning from the Beatles" and elsewhere in his book *The Performing Self*.) Serious — as opposed to "ignorant," not to "pleasurable and unpretentious" — observation of sport is an exercise of imagination, a participation in a formal "life" outside the limiting predispositions of class and taste. And by allowing a fantasy content to it I don't suggest that its effects are trivial or unsubstantial. In watching sport our powers of attention and affection are enlarged and made more generous by being attached to actions that are admirably beyond our own performing abilities.

No doubt the self as sports fan is narrower and more static than the selves other arts invite us to experience. If sport doesn't turn us all into bullies, sadists and warmongers, neither does it often lead to the very finest possibilities of feeling and judgment. (In fact it can lead to, or at least objectify, obsession and madness, as in Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association* and Frederick Exley's *A Fan's Notes*.)

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But in watching it one learns to value a physical life that's also a form of intelligence, all the more impressive — at least to the clerkly and sedentary — for operating preverbally, preconceptually, in the trained coincidence of strength, neural quickness, instinct, memory and will.

Easy metaphors for what athletes do are just silly. Consider what might, and shouldn't, be made of this remark from *Instant Replay* by Jerry Kramer, the great offensive guard of the Packers:

> I must get some enjoyment out of the game, though I can't say what it is. It isn't just the body contact. . . . Body contact gives me only cuts and contusions, bruises and abrasions. I suppose I enjoy doing something well. I enjoy springing a back loose, making a good trap block, a good solid trap block, cutting down my man the way I'm supposed to.

In that last phrase Meggysey, and Agnew too, may hear the voice of Lt. Calley — like the soldier, the athlete enacts our subservience to social and political systems, our substitution, for good or ill, of "authority" for our own humanity. But even Jim Bouton, in his struggling persistence even when the rewards were dwindling down, knew that there was something in sport for which teaching and social work, or, as it turned out, TV sports reporting, could happily be postponed a little longer, something more than obeying "the system" which he himself never stopped thumbing his nose at. In "the way I'm supposed to" I hear not just Jerry Kramer's fear of Vince Lombardi, though Lombardi was indeed an archetypal establishmentarian tyrant, but also his understanding that his own performance, to be worth the effort expended, had to be intelligible to himself and others, and that such intelligibility requires an idea of terribly difficult perfection that can't be named in words but is recognizable, when achieved, by players and knowing spectators alike.

American athletes do pay for their fame and fortune by being subjected to economic and personal dependency of a very humiliating kind. Few other grown men are told when to go to bed or given as little say in how to do their work; it's like being in the army or in prison, though the pay and hours are better and no one is there against his will. But the subjective plight of the athlete is considerably less painful, to him or to me, than that of migrant farm workers or the urban poor; even the black athlete, of whom more is demanded (often for less money), makes out better in sport than he would in other American occupations, and he's seldom *more* militant, to say the least, than his brothers outside. To make sport directly represent American

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life is not a very good way of understanding what's wrong with that life.

The experience of Meggysey and Bouton does prove that thoughtful and sensitive people aren't apt to be very happy as professional athletes, though no doubt it helps if one is superlatively skilled and plays for a winning team. But for the onlookers, this too is an element in the imaginative meaning of sport. What the players do *should* have little relation to thought and sensitivity as we know and value them outside sport — it feels simpler and mysteriously better than that. If this is pastoral fantasy, with its intimations of inexpressible virtue in the physical life, of persisting connections with childhood innocence, of a "democratic" transcendence of the social and cultural self-definitions that ordinarily separate us from "other kinds" of people, it's still a necessary and beneficent mode of self-imagining, whose fantasies are at least less harmful than some of the things sport can be confused with. Neither Bouton's scoffing, Meggysey's moral outrage nor Agnew's bland benedictions help me very much to think about sport, which can't tell us much about the present state of society but can help a little in understanding and better respecting our own desires.

Thomas R. Edwards

IN THE MIND

NOAM CHOMSKY. By John Lyons. (Modern Masters Series, ed. Frank Kermode.) Viking. $5.75.

The claim that the study of language leads to self-knowledge is as old as Socrates. Its revival in our age, which is so obsessed with psychoanalysis and other nonrational means to the discovery of the self, should make for a more balanced conception of human nature and a better understanding of the relation between the scientific and humanistic approaches to the study of the human mind. In stimulating this revival, Noam Chomsky has made a major contribution to contemporary thought. He offers a new conception of the structure of language and its relation to the organization of the mind, and he proposes a revolutionary reassessment of what the social sciences are and should be. While John Lyons's recent book, the middle chapters of which are a sound introduction to technical detail, is useful in enabling the layman to understand Chomksy's views on language, mind and the social sciences, more needs to be said about the larger implications of Chomsky's work and about the connections between his technical work and his desire to redefine the tasks of the humanities and the social sciences.

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It's helpful first to place Chomsky's conceptions of language and the human mind in the context of the contemporary intellectual scene. Though C. P. Snow's dualistic conception of the world of science and the world of the humanities is coming to be — it probably always was — a cliché, it is still useful to apply to current concepts of language and the self. The humanist today likes to think that the most significant uses of language defy complete systematic description, reduction to rules. Uses of language express something uniquely different, it is supposed, in each of us. For the humanist, the problem of understanding human nature is the problem of specifying what it is that makes us different from one another — what "gives us our identity." Attacks on this essentially subjectivistic view of language are usually interpreted as attempts at dehumanization, robbing men of their dignity. In contrast, the scientist tends to look at people not so much as individuals, but as members of the same species. He explains the distinctions between ours and other species from which we presumably evolved as differences in degree and not in kind. As a result, the social sciences tend to break down complex cognitive skills and capacities into a network of simple structures such as might be found in the capacities of other animal species. The methodological creed of the social sciences emphasizes, in the name of being scientific, the classification of empirical data, rather than theoretical understanding.

Chomsky's conception differs from both the humanist and what is taken to be the scientific. Like a scientist, he looks at language as a biological phenomenon; but unlike the linguists of the previous generation he wants to locate the structure of this phenomenon across the species. Furthermore, unlike the social scientists of today, Chomsky thinks that one can infer from the formal features of language certain cognitive capacities that are radically different from those of other animal species. One of the most remarkable facts about Chomsky's theory is that in order to support his claims, he uses data earlier thought of as subjective and belonging to the humanities. According to Chomsky, what the humanist at his best can unearth about our linguistic intuitions and the creative use of language can be used in a scientific theory arguing that the organization of our cognitive capacities and processes differs drastically from the structure of capacities that we ascribe to other animals or to inert matter.

Chomsky thinks that the social sciences ought to concern themselves with this kind of argument. Accordingly, the main goal of the social sciences should be theoretical understanding rather than control, as abstractly considered as are the more advanced physical sciences. Chomsky's is a classic conception of man, unlike the self-indulgent,

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romantic, subjectivistic individualism so rampant in the West. It emphasizes not what appears to separate men as individuals but rather what they have in common, and it finds, furthermore, that what they have in common is distinctive, in that it is tied to reason rather than to man's nonrational aspects. The naïve scientism of the empiricists is thus shown to be incompatible with real work in the social sciences, and the goal of the humanities becomes to uncover what we have intellectually in common rather than what might separate us. In sum, while today's humanist claims that each individual is different and the scientist that not even the species is drastically different from others, Chomsky says that not the individual but the species has distinctive capacities, which are revealed in the creative use of language.

Chomsky's humanism, like the humanism of Plato or Aristotle, implies that self-knowledge shows us what we share with other members of the species. It is to discover of what our humanity consists, and the crucial element here is the use of reason. One of the reasons for the contemporary turn to the irrational as the seat of individuality has been the myth that the partial simulation of cognitive skills by the computers has shown there is nothing distinctly human about rationality. Chomsky's work shows that to know ourselves is partly to know how we reason, what concepts we use; and that this can be understood best by finding out more and more about the language we use.

Debates about the nature of the mind and the self have traditionally been conducted as debates over the existence of physical and mental substances. Lyons correctly points out that according to Chomsky such debates are empty of content. As knowledge of the world increases — and with it knowledge of the workings of the mind — there have been changes in conceptions of what is matter and what might be regarded as mental. Many things have been added to the idea of matter since the time of Descartes. Thus, the real issue is not about the use of words like mental and material, it is whether the structure and organization of cognitive processes and capacities are similar to or different from those of other biological phenomena or physical processes.

Of course, many questions can be raised about language, but only some of them have theoretical significance. Bertrand Russell — though in quite a different context — once characterized theoreticians who ask the right type of conceptual questions as "having a good nose for reality," and this description seems particularly apt when one considers Chomsky's original way of calling attention to what he regards as "the fundamental underlying facts" about language. The creative linguistic competence (our ability to understand utterances that we never

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encountered before), the fact that the English language contains an infinite number of well formed sentences, and the fact that there is no clear limit on the length of certain types of sentences — all, according to Chomsky, must be taken into consideration in any adequate set of rules for a language, and any adequate characterization of linguistic competence must represent the mastery of such rules. Further, any adequate conception of the mind, one that would account for the capacity to master these rules, shows that cognitive processes are autonomous. This means that we cannot look at these processes as mere reactions to environmental changes. The basic insight that the functioning of the mind is not determined by environmental stimuli is implicit in Plato, and is made explicit by Descartes. But Chomsky succeeds in transforming what was for Descartes a piece of philosophical speculation into a scientific hypothesis that can be tested by empirical evidence; and what looks at first glance like a murky metaphysical issue about mind and matter becomes a verifiable hypothesis.

Chomsky's conception of language has far-reaching consequences. First, as suggested above, it involves the reorientation of the study of languages to discover common elements rather than differences, for if the conception of language as a biological phenomenon is to stand up, then similarities will have to be found. An analogous reorientation took place in anthropology. It was once very fashionable in anthropology to assert the relativity of values, thus denying that there are any fundamental principles of conduct invariant across cultures — principles that might be regarded as given innately. This view went hand in hand with an emphasis on overt forms of behavior as against abstract theoretical frameworks. More recently it became clear that to understand a culture one must look not only at its customs but also at the underlying principles of behavior, which, given the variations in economic and geographic settings as well as the differences in scientific knowledge, will be manifested in different cultures in a variety of ways as the same concept is applied to superficially different situations. Once anthropologists began to look for underlying elements, they were able to discover a number of principles seemingly acceptable to all cultures. Just so, in linguistics, Chomsky notes the common rules underlying all languages instead of considering merely their surface variety. It was necessary here to show how these systems of rules can be assigned mathematically precise properties. This study became known as mathematical linguistics, and it is important to understand that the development of the discipline is related to Chomsky's claim that the study of language can tell us important things about the human

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mind. For without the possibility of a formal characterization of the rules of a language, philosophical and psychological claims for it could not be made in any reasonably precise way.

Let me try to clarify the claim that the formal specifications of the rules of grammar reveals something deep about the organization of the human mind. Lyons emphasizes that, according to Chomsky, the data to be explained by an adequate linguistic theory consist of the linguistic intuitions of the competent speakers, i.e., intuitions about what is or is not a well formed sentence and about the structural relation between sentences in a language. This by itself already establishes a link between the study of language and the study of the human mind, since the data to be considered have psychological reality. It also shows a way in which linguistics connects the humanities with the social sciences by linking them to the data. But in order to see the full significance of the proposal we must go beyond Lyons's analysis: the idea of intuitions leads to a psychological reality for a set of rules. If linguistic competence involves the mastery of a set of rules, then a human being with that competence must have internalized it. Since the system of rules has definite formal properties, we are able to ask what sort of a structure must the human mind have if it can internalize such a formalized system of rules? The general principle is that an analysis of competence leads to a characterization of the instrument possessing such competence. The significance or triviality of the connections will depend on how thorough the analysis of the competence has been. For example, if we view human language merely as systems that will allow one creature to signal another in the presence of certain external stimuli (e.g., danger), then we can only conclude that a human being is the kind of entity that is capable of developing such a signaling system. This capacity would hardly distinguish us from other animal species, since many of them, like the deer, have developed such systems.

Once we move on to the kinds of specifications that Chomsky offers — in terms of creativity and the unboundedness of length, etc. — far more interesting and theoretically significant observations can be made concerning the organization of the mind. For some time, it's been assumed that a fairly simple automaton could handle the kinds of rules that a language like English requires. Among Chomsky's early successes was the demonstration that this is not the case. One can correlate different types of sets of rules — grammars — with automata of various degrees of complexity. The specific requirements for these correlations, along with Chomsky's insistence that English requires rules with very special formal properties, so-called transformations, may lead to the conclusion that full linguistic competence

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of a speaker of a natural language cannot be captured by any automaton known to us. But while such a conclusion would be welcome by the humanist, let us not forget that what was for the humanist speculation within an imprecise terminology is in Chomsky a question of rigorous demonstration. (To look at the formal properties of a grammar and then to consider the structure of an automaton that can accept that language may be a new way of formulating hypotheses about the mind, though the general pattern is as old as Plato or at least Kant. The rationalist philosophers argued from their characterization of certain competences — e.g., logic or mathematics — to what the human mind must be like. Lyons errs when he claims that Chomsky's earlier writings — which include most of the work on mathematical linguistics — are still within the empiricist tradition: the way in which the questions for mathematical linguistics are formulated is the rationalist way of formulating inferences about the nature of the mind.) As a further consequence of Chomsky's work we should note that attempts to simulate the interpretation of various fragments of a natural language like English by computers or other devices will have no theoretical significance; Chomsky's specifications of creativity and infiniteness decisively refute the theory — so popular with social scientists and with certain philosophers like Wittgenstein — that linguistic competence is merely the sum of simple skills involved in the interpretation of small fragments.

It is easy to see that Chomsky's pattern of explanation can be applied to other aspects of mental activity, to parts of psychology and to other social sciences. As I suggested earlier, his way of looking at linguistic competence involves by extension a new way of looking at the social sciences: their task as now construed is not merely to correlate observations and to attempt to devise mechanisms of control; it is rather to give a careful formal analysis of various competences — those whose possession involves the mastery of a set of rules — and to argue from such analyses to the internal structure of the human mind. Such explanations will be far more concerned with understanding than with control or predictability; in this respect they will come closer to contemporary work in the pure physical sciences than to social engineering. Inventing controls over behavior is in itself neither good nor bad; its value depends on how control is used, by whom and for what purpose. But in any case, following Chomsky, such work should be the job of the applied social sciences, and not that of theory within the fields of social science.

Chomsky assumes that we have internalized various systems of rules, and further that manipulations of them are crucial in understanding. These assumptions, and some well-known facts, lead to the claim

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that many vital intellectual processes take place on a nonconscious level. Chomsky's role here is analogous to Freud's: Freud stressed the importance of the subconscious for the understanding of the nonrational part of the self; Chomsky can be construed as the Freud of cognitive psychology. Again, the idea can be worked back to the classic conception of the human mind. For both Socrates and Plato assumed that the most crucial processes of reasoning and understanding take place at a level beneath consciousness. They both regarded the formation of concepts that underlies our use of descriptive terms as a process for which we can have only indirect evidence, for neither the formation of concepts nor their content was thought to be open to introspection. Thus the dialogue form, thus the laborious questioning by which the subject was supposed to come to a deeper understanding of the concepts he employs — and, thereby, of himself. The implication — again shared with Freud — is that the subject may not himself be the best judge of his concepts or his beliefs. Sharing these views, Chomsky further proposes that in our use of language and in our mental processes the speaker himself may not be the best judge of what his linguistic intuitions really are and of what they indicate about his system of concepts. That Chomsky is concerned with intellectual processes and Freud primarily with emotional ones, is not, of course, the only important difference between them: Chomsky's procedure for arguing from the structure of a competence to the partial structure of a mind possessing that competence is cast in rigorous mathematical form, while no such formal procedure can be used to illuminate Freud's propositions. Opponents of Chomsky cannot quarrel with the formal properties of his analyses; their objections will have to be centered on the nature of the data that Chomsky is willing to employ.

Still another important part of Chomsky's hypothesis about the mind is that a whole network of concepts is innate to it, some of which are crucial for linguistic competence. The innateness hypothesis too goes back to the classic conception: it is a more scientific version of Plato's metaphoric theory of recollection as learning. It has, in fact, a curious history in the development of the American social sciences, and neither the early vigorous rejections of it nor the more recent sympathetic attitudes toward it have really much to do with the substantive issues raised by serious discussion like Chomsky's. For the rise of the social sciences in America has been characterized by a deeply and typically American attitude of optimism. Behaviorism, or any other view that stressed the importance of the environment, recommended itself as the most viable hypothesis, since Americans not only believed — and perhaps many still do — that they could lick anything, they believed in

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particular that they could manipulate the environment almost at will. At the same time it was tacitly assumed that what is innate cannot be changed for the better — or worse — by the scientist. Therefore, the innateness hypothesis was construed as clashing with the optimistic attitude underlying the whole enterprise of developing a science of man. Recently, as a result of new work in genetics and physiology, the idea that what is innate cannot be changed has been shaken; and the way is now open to reconcile the innateness hypothesis with the optimism which is still characteristic of much of the American view of the social sciences. It is possible, then, that while Chomsky's argument merits attention on its own, his conclusions may gain currency in some quarters or disfavor for largely irrelevant reasons — yet another illustration of the fact (deplorable as it may be) that the reception of a scientific hypothesis often depends on factors that are scientifically irrelevant and have only sociological and cultural explanations.

Chomsky's conception of linguistic competence and the human mind provides a badly needed theoretical foundation for the humanities. Too much teaching in the humanities rests on implicit assumptions of subjectivistic individualism. Students are encouraged to think that they have some kind of privileged access to information about the meanings they assign to various terms in their language, that the syntactic constructions they use are their own inventions which vary greatly from individual to individual. The exploration of creative uses of language is assumed to be nothing more than an exploration into a realm of phenomena where everyone is licensed to make a unique contribution. And all of this is supposed to contribute to the preservation of human dignity and the values of our culture. No wonder when the inevitable questions are asked they are unanswerable. How do the humanities help us understand human nature? Do they show us anything about the species not otherwise known? If so, is it not something that the sciences — especially the social sciences — could better demonstrate? In what sense can one regard humanistic insights as objective and intersubjectively testable?

But once we abandon the assumptions now underying much teaching in the humanities and apply Chomsky's theories, the answers are readily forthcoming. To a great extent, the purpose of those branches of the humanities concerned with language and literature is the refinement of linguistic intuitions, the development of awareness about the nature of intuitions and the enlargement of what is considered thinkable. The study of forms and content have to go together, and the silly idea that we should get away from "dull grammar" and emphasize "mere content" should be discarded. When we explore a lan-

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guage and encourage its creative use by individuals, we are exploring and encouraging what we have in common, not what separates us. Rule-governed behavior and creative behavior are, according to Chomsky, not opposites; on the contrary, without the former, the latter is impossible. (Of course, in order to appreciate this, one must have a sufficiently sophisticated conception of what rules can be like.)

In so far as the humanities are concerned with enlarging our understanding of language, they enlarge our understanding of what is distinctly human. In understanding my language more deeply I learn what unites me with others and thereby I also learn about myself. The miracle of language is that grammar and meaning enable us to understand a large part of the total set of utterances without knowing who produced them, when, where and why. The point can be extended from the study of language to the study of science or literature. What makes culture possible is that much that is asserted can be understood without knowing who proposed it, when, where and why. The humanities today, at least in the West, do not adequately emphasize the impersonal quality of ideas, beliefs and theories: one should be able to show how *education must be intensely impersonal* without being misunderstood or charged with manufacturing a paradox.

There is one question bound to be raised by anyone even vaguely familiar with Chomsky: what's the connection between his theoretical work and his political stands? Like Russell, Chomsky too has repeatedly emphasized that there are no strictly logical entailments binding one to the other. Nevertheless, it is no accident that a theoretician who sees the essence of being human in what we have in common, rather than what allegedly makes us different, should also protest against social and economic individualism and against Western society's sanctification of competitive values. Nor is it simply accident that a thinker who has contributed so much to the analysis of man's creative capacities should protest against the political and economic forces that stifle the average citizen. It is also worth asking what social and economic structure would be hospitable to Chomsky's conception of the social sciences, since his emphasis on understanding rather than utility and control cannot be used to produce results to create mechanisms for control and exploitation. In our society, human reasoning is explained merely as a series of reactions to environment and environment is then used to explain the content of reasoning; and it is difficult to make a strong case against the kind of mass psychological exploitation the social sciences have pressured to facilitate. Chomsky offers at least the foundation of a theoretical stand that condemns psychological exploitation without relying on the dubious arguments of old-fashioned individualism.

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Chomsky's conception of the social sciences is not likely to flourish in a society in which the political and economic pressures on the social sciences are enormous, and push in the direction of producing mechanisms of control that can be used for the exploitation of the many by a self-appointed few. His views cannot be captured by catchy slogans; and this alone should encourage further study of his work. The development of some of the ideas sketched here is necessary to any framework within which we can explain reason, self-knowledge and the way in which the combination of science and the humanities can lead at least to a partial comprehension of both.

J. M. E. Moravcsik

IN DREAMS BEGIN

NATHANAEL WEST: THE ART OF HIS LIFE. By Jay Martin. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. $10.00.

There are writers whose work constitutes an antibiography — an obliquity, a false swearing; but Nathanael West's life kept pace with his books, in a kind of race to disaster. Like the diminutive creatures running amok in the mazes of his plots, all terribly shrunken from a full humanity, West himself was — as his brother-in-law S. J. Perelman said — "only eighteen inches high . . . very sensitive [and] somewhat savage." His ego was a festering blister, and in a doomed, recurrent effort, he lied to soothe it. Everything he said, everything he did, West gilded, for both himself and others, with fantasy — even changing his name from plain Nathan Weinstein to Nathaniel von Wallenstein Weinstein, before hiding from his Eastern European heritage altogether behind the name of a famous American mariner, Nathaniel West. In his fiction a relentless diagnostician of the daydream, West was in his life a textbook example of the disease. And for this West blamed himself no more than he finally blamed his characters — after all, he seemed to say, life gives us nothing; let the ego wear the emperor's clothes for a day.

Like his fiction, moreover, West's own story is marked by a savage series of disappointments. In each not only is nothing given, but what might have been given is held out, then snatched away: the overwhelming character of life is, in both, a nasty baiting. In his third novel, *A Cool Million,* West popped open the Horatio Alger lie of an America of fair play and opportunity to show the pain and corruption inside; but every novelist is a hero out of Alger, Fame and Truth his land of opportunity, and West wanted large sales, a name with bells on it, suc-

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cess. After all, he had exceptional talent, and he wrote conscientiously, in strenuous dead lifts — five pages a month; he was deserving. So with almost the innocence of his own Lemuel Pitkin, West awaited renown. It did not come.

The Depression, then Hitler, and a reading public hungry for dreams, not antidreams — these combined, like the nails of one claw, to choke West's career. *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933) — which stood, according to the *New York Times,* "to be one of the hits of the year, to win both popular and critical approval" — went not to the bookstores, but to one of its publisher's creditors, with whom it blushed unseen. A few months after publication, *A Cool Million* (1934) remaindered for twenty-five cents. *Gentlemen, the War!,* a play written with Joseph Shrank, died in the silence of an audience that was not amused: mockingly antiwar, it came to the boards several months too late, having been upstaged by Hitler's first pogroms against Jews. West's last novel, *The Day of the Locust* (1939), proved "a complete financial bust." The only way to increase sales, West said, was to assassinate Hitler.

With women West fared no better. They stepped toward him, and the floor gave way; but it was, in most instances, West who pulled the trap. There was something in his heart that excluded them. In 1930, Beatrice Mathieu, a correspondent for the *New Yorker,* left for Paris with a dog that West had given her. He was to follow, but did not; she had the dog to remember him by. Next came Alice Shepard, chief fashion model for Elizabeth Hawes. West saw her off one night at Grand Central Station, then slept with a friend of hers; Alice found out and failed to "understand." She got the dedication to *The Dream Life of Balso Snell* (1931). Then there was the married woman who lived near West's farm in Pennsylvania; she tried suicide. Intermittently, West got his own back, in gonorrhea and a prostate gland (so he almost boasted) as big as an orange.

Then came the Eileen of Ruth McKenney's *My Sister Eileen.* Case-hardened to both rejection and rejecting, lost from herself, she strayed into the inmost chambers of West's curious heart and, miraculously, was not evicted. West was surprised and elated; he grew, people said, before their eyes. He even turned hopeful about politics, as if, himself having ceased to bait and crush, the world would follow. West's loyalty to procommunist Eileen sent him to a Marxist study group rather as one sends a child to Sunday school; and soon West — the most gnawing public skeptic of his age — was solemnly criticizing those who use "their own gnawing doubt to eat away other people's affirmative acts." "I feel quite bitter about it," he said. Having achieved this fresh innocence, West — according to the logic of his own fiction — was ripe for dis-

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mantlement; he was, as they say, asking for it. And the logic of things in general, endorsing his fiction, obliged. In 1940, eight months after marrying, West and Eileen died in an automobile accident, their skulls dashed against pavement. And as for the world at large, it proved that it was possible to go on even worse than before.

Jay Martin, West's first major biographer, says of West's death that "West lived out his metaphysic of the accidentalness of doom." Not so. Martin tells West's story scrupulously — if with neither fine selection nor finesse — and fixes West firmly in the America of his time; but in perception and judgment he is almost invariably inexact. The truth is that West killed himself, despite Eileen, out of a habit of not caring. He drove "murderously" — a word whose precision Eileen both hit upon and proved. A fellow writer at Republic Studios used to warn West that he would die on the highway; West's answer — proceeding as from one of his own melodramatic film scripts — "was always the same scornful laughter."

It was life itself that West scorned — the life that for his generation, he said, had "lost its savour." Martin's biography, for all its careful thoroughness, does not quite tell us why. Somewhere in West, amid the whirl of nameable causes — the Great War, the Depression, his parents' crass immigrant's dream of success — there lay an unattainable, mysterious source of despair. As if born middle aged, he came precociously to a conviction, permanently cryptic, of "the necessity for laughing at everything, love, death, ambition, etc." Even when aiding American migrants or Spanish peasants, West could never think of "hope and faith without a smile." He was helpless before his own despair.

Doubtless, the root cause was not intellectual, but it spread into an intellectual form: a radical suspicion of all emotion. "You'd want to . . . let an emotion out" in West's presence, says one of his friends, but "you'd know that if you did, you'd offend him. . . . It would be almost a physical offense." The reason was the most modern and insidious form of highmindedness, a sterile insistence on sincerity. Remove from emotion the arbitrary structures that culture provides and (so West seems to have concluded) it would assume no shape at all — we could not even find it. In an outline for an abortive autobiographical novel, West noted flatly: "The impossibility of experiencing genuine emotion." His first novel, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell,* usually read as a parody of literature, is more fundamentally a mockery of "the mystery of feeling": "the ritual of feeling" itself "demands burlesque."

It was, in part, this skepticism toward the emotions that narrowed West against women and against the daybreak calls of "hope and

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faith." The substance of suffering and joy, the basis of all belief, was largely denied to him. No wonder he drove murderously. West's death rather furtively illustrates his own thesis that the violence in American life, the violence *against* life, explodes out of disappointed feeling — only in this instance it was feeling itself, and not any particular dream, that had "cheated."

The special, ugly-poetic flavor of West's fiction — the sense of "flowers that smelled of feet" — sprang from a contradiction in his response toward emotion in others. On the one hand, West was repelled by the "secondhand" dreams and feelings of the mass of Americans. On the other, he had — as a result of managing two hotels during the Depression — an acute and aching knowledge of their undeniable suffering. Steaming open letters in the hotels and later cultivating Hollywood grotesques, West was a voyeur of suffering and, guiltily, he knew he had nothing to offer the bored and cheated, except a compassion that they did not want and could not use. His brief books, volleys of scorn and pain, are acts of a generous despair. And yet, so little hopeful was West, so cynical was his generosity, that he ungenerously earned a living by tossing off cheap film scripts in Hollywood — betraying in one medium those whom he pitied in another.

All told, it is false to speak of West — as Jay Martin does — as a moralist in the great tradition of those who have had, in Yeats's words, dreams "of an impossibly noble life." Not only were West's daily fantasies (by all evidence) anecdotal, comfortably trivial in despair of higher dreams; his fiction constitutes an outright negation of wishing. West's only nobility — and it is considerable — lies in his anguished antagonism to dreams, his courage of skepticism and despair. In daily life, indeed at the very moment of his death, West may well have been as dreamily foolish and "betrayed" as the "broken bastards" he wrote about; in the pages of his fiction, however, he took his essential poverty — his and everyone else's — upon himself. For all the spareness and originality of his anomalous fiction, West carried the noblest impulse of the classical novel to its farthest end: he discovered, without hedging, the insufficiency of the real. He is an exemplary instance of an antifantast working in the medium of make-believe. In West we find in crystalline form the two qualities that — as the French critic Saurat has said — distinguish modern writing generally: "total sincerity and total courage."

Calvin Bedient

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ROBERT'S RULES

THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST. Ed. Edward Connery Lathem. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $10.95.

Obviously "punctuation" doesn't exist in isolation: it is only part of the difficult process of trying to put the poem on the page, of trying to make written lines correspond to the complex rhythms and accents in the poet's head. When it succeeds, usually it is invisible; one doesn't notice commas and semicolons, but hears pauses and accents. In order to do this, poets are often pushed into radical solutions.

For example, in *The Waste Land,* the final "burning" at the end of Part III ("The Fire Sermon") is the *only* word that begins a line at the margin that isn't also capitalized. One isn't aware of the absence of capitalization; the word simply seems to have an extraordinary spare starkness and intensity.

And in "La Jeune Parque," a section begins: "Harmonieuse MOI, différente d'un songe. . . ." And later: "Mystérieuse MOI, pourtant, tu vis encore!" Capitalization makes "MOI" an object, a dense thing; it almost becomes in itself a metaphor for the heavy clotted impenetrability of the self. Jackson Mathews, in his translation for the New Directions *Selected Writings of Valéry,* misses this entirely: "Harmonious Self, but different from a vision. . . ."

Nevertheless, punctuation is often less abundant, and less necessarily flamboyant, when a traditional metric controls emphases and pauses. In Wordsworth's blank verse, for example, punctuation is at times quite spare. It becomes more dense the closer he comes to the twists and thrusts of ordinary common speech — when, that is, the poem seems less straightforwardly metrical. And in the sections of the "Immortality Ode" that join different meters (particularly in the transitions between them), Wordsworth punctuates with great freshness and bravado:

> *. . . the sun shines warm,*
> *And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm: —*
> *I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!*
> *— But there's a Tree, of many, one . . .*

Wordsworth wrote: "The composition of verse is infinitely more of an art than men are prepared to believe; and absolute success in it depends on innumerable *minutiae.*"

For anyone who cares about Frost or poetry *The Poetry of Robert Frost* is an infuriating book. Its editor, Edward Lathem, has *repunctuated*

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about half of Frost's poems. The only reason he gives is "greater textual clarity," but this doesn't at all describe his pointless, destructive practice. "The woods are lovely, dark, and deep" (Lathem's version) is not clearer than "The woods are lovely, dark and deep" (Frost's). In "To Earthward," by adding a single comma, he actually manages to reverse the meaning of a whole stanza. His publishers, in a rather nervous note, assert that the volume has been "scrupulously edited for textual accuracy." On the contrary, what they intend to be the "standard" one-volume edition of Frost's complete poetry has a grotesquely corrupt text.

Creating "textual clarity" by emending punctuation, at least in a modern author, is just wrongheaded. Frost says (in a book Lathem helped edit), "The heart sinks when robbed of the chance to see for itself what a poem is all about." But Lathem also doesn't understand the ways punctuation works in poetry. Basically, I think, a poet punctuates not simply for "meaning," or some notion of grammatical "correctness," but for rhythm and dramatic accent. Confronted with Lathem's "regularizing" of Frost's punctuation, one realizes how genuinely strange and adventuresome Frost often is.

Take the beginning of "Mending Wall." This is the original:

> *Something there is that doesn't love a wall,*
> *That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,*
> *And spills the upper boulders in the sun;*
> *And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.*

Frost wants a slight pause at the end of the second line (one greater than the inevitable pause at the end of a line), and an even greater one at the end of the third. The semicolon after "sun" isn't "normal" punctuation, but it isn't bewildering; one simply experiences a slight shock that "and makes gaps" has the same subject as the earlier "spills." The speaker doesn't seem to have the whole sentence planned before he begins. The punctuation emphasizes the thrust and hesitations of the voice. This is Lathem's version:

> *Something there is that doesn't love a wall,*
> *That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it*
> *And spills the upper boulders in the sun,*
> *And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.*

The hesitations are gone; the speaker is saying something he has entirely worked out beforehand. He is declaiming. The variety, the *life* are gone. Lathem has treated the passage as if it were prose, and undramatic prose at that.

Awesome and incomprehensible as it seems, he has done this to

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about half the poems in the book. This is the original opening of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening":

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;

Lathem adds a comma after "village." Suddenly "though" seems stuck on for the rhyme. More important, he has destroyed the slightly trance-like, lulled movement of the whole poem: in the original, *none* of the lines have a midline pause except "The woods are lovely, dark and deep." Lathem breaks up the latter even more ("The woods are lovely, dark, and deep"). "Dark and deep" in Frost's version becomes almost a single quality; with a kind of simple elegance, the phrase suggests the mystery beneath this "loveliness." For Lathem, the woods are more flatly three different things: lovely, dark, deep.

"To Earthward" is Lathem's nadir. In the early stanzas the poet has discussed the unmixed "sweet things" that once gave joy. Here is the original version of what follows, lines 17-19:

Now no joy but lacks salt
That is not dashed with pain
And weariness and fault;

Now joy without "pain/ And weariness" is not strong enough, fails to reach him, "lacks salt." Later he says: "I crave the stain/ Of tears . . ./ The sweet of bitter bark." Lathem adds a comma to the end of line 17, and by doing so reverses the meaning of all three lines:

Now no joy but lacks salt,
That is not dashed with pain
And weariness and fault;

Suddenly "is" becomes parallel to "lacks," and the lines say that *every* joy "lacks salt," *every* joy is "dashed with pain." This is not only wrong, but self-contradictory: if every joy "*lacks* salt" it cannot also be "dashed with pain." In any case, in the name of "textual clarity," Lathem has ruined a crucial stanza.

Frost's punctuation, like Wordsworth's, is often spare, but when he approaches common speech, is at times surprisingly intricate. This is the end of "Home Burial"; husband and wife have been bitterly arguing.

'You — *oh, you think the talk is all. I must go —*
Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you —'

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'If — you — do!' She was opening the door wider.
'Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.
I'll follow and bring you back by force. I will! — '

One is shocked that the entire 116-line poem ends so abruptly; the argument hasn't ended, and the pathos is that one suddenly realizes it never will. The final dash emphasizes the lack of resolution, and has a kind of symbolic weight.

Throughout his life Frost continued to revise his poems, and at times we can see him pushed into radical or untraditional solutions to tricky passages. "The Tuft of Flowers" is a good example. For the 1949 *Complete Poems* he dropped an entire stanza. In 1939, he changed the punctuation of the second line of these two stanzas:

But he had gone his way, the grass all mown,
And I must be, as he had been — alone,

'As all must be,' I said within my heart,
'Whether they work together or apart.'

"Alone" seems to me too abrupt; the line is sadder if the rhythm is more regular, if "alone" has a kind of large inevitability. For whatever reason, Frost was dissatisfied. He added a comma after "been," and the line then reads: "And I must be, as he had been, — alone." To my ear, this is an excellent solution (particularly when read in context, in the cadence of the whole poem). Frost kept it in all the later editions that he supervised.

Lathem goes back to the first version. The decision is symptomatic of his taste in handling variants throughout his edition. In many poems he restores readings Frost later rejected, and in all the cases that I have noticed, he simply seems to me wrong. Unlike many poets (unlike, in many cases, Wordsworth), Frost revised excellently.

The single merit of Lathem's volume is the listing of variants and dates of first publication at the back. One aches that he didn't stop there. Frost's brilliant essay "The Figure a Poem Makes" has been dropped. Lathem prints it in *Selected Prose of Robert Frost,* and I suppose he decided that, buried there, he need not include it. It has served as the preface for every collected edition of Frost's poetry since 1939, and Frost obviously wanted it in that exemplary position. Its absence is a fitting symbol of the betrayal of Frost that this volume represents.

Frank Bidart

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United Nations Assistance to Refugees from East Pakistan in India

Some $110 million have been pledged through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, comprising both cash and kind. The Government of India has set up refugee camps in the five areas most affected by the influx, and has made available food, shelter, medicaments, and clothing from both local resources and from the contributions made through the U.N. system. The needs of the refugees, nevertheless, remain immense. The number of refugee has, as of 1 September, reached over 8.3 million.

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●

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VARIETY

CRY WOLF

If the publishers ever reissue this bright-tincted ephemerid, they should do so with an appendix of quotations from the reviews, which surely confirm the author's point beyond his fondest dreams.[1] Wolfe of course is a "parajournalist." Besides writing the hippest fop's English since Oscar Wilde, he is the finest amateur sociologist in the business. From car customizers, to surfing teenies, to the New York art world, the subculture he can't mimic doesn't exist. Like Wilde, he does it by relentlessly probing the surfaces. And in moral America, this makes some people uneasy.

The book consists of two complementary essays. "Radical Chic," a shorter version of which first appeared in *New York Magazine*, takes off from the party given by Felicia (Mrs. Leonard) Bernstein in the Bernstein Park Avenue duplex, to raise bail money for New York Black Panthers. It invites us to amuse ourselves over some interesting ironies in the soul kissing of Beautiful People and Raw Primitives:

> For example, does that huge Black Panther there in the hallway . . . the one with the black leather coat and the dark glasses and the absolutely unbelievable Afro, Fuzzy-Wuzzy scale, in fact — is he, a Black Panther, going on to pick up a Roquefort cheese morsel rolled in crushed nuts from off the tray, from a maid in uniform, and just pop it down the gullet without so much as missing a beat of Felicia's perfect Mary Astor voice . . . [?]

The essay traces, all too briefly, the history of this flirtation and of analogous fashionable impulses, under the generic nineteenth-century label of *nostalgie de la boue,* nostalgia for the mud. In case we didn't know, the proneness of the idle rich to associate themselves with the life styles of the vital poor is not exactly a new thing under the sun. As for the particular issues involved in *l'affaire* Bernstein, the narrator has no doubts whatever about the sincerity of all concerned: "One's heart does cry out — quite spontaneously! — upon hearing how the police have dealt with the Panthers, dragging an epileptic like Lee Berry out of his hospital bed and throwing him into the Tombs." We then hear Lenny Bernstein, Otto Preminger and Barbara Walters of the "Today" show pursuing the Panthers with some heavy queries about their program. They sound like a seminar full of the goodest bright students all listening to the seriousness of their own voices as they ask really hard questions. But in fact, just as things are getting rather warm,

1. RADICAL CHIC & MAU-MAUING THE FLAK CATCHERS. By Tom Wolfe. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. $5.50.

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> "Power to the people!" says Leon Quat . . . and all rise to their feet . . . and Charlotte Curtis puts the finishing touches in her notebook . . . and the white servants wait patiently in the wings to wipe the drink rings off the Amboina tables.

So much for dialogue. As a piece of writing, "Radical Chic" isn't Wolfe's best. In fact it reads a little like stretched bubble gum (though to my palate Wolfe bubble gum is tastier than most writers' steak and potatoes — in fact, a hack job, like, stretch it out for that deadline and the dodos will never know the difference. I attribute this, actually, to authorial boredom. The Beautiful People are not going to teach *Wolfe* anything about style. And alas, the rhetoric–laden Panthers, though they do succeed in hooking a corner of his admiration, are not going to teach him anything about revolution. More on this below.

The companion essay, "Mau–Mauing the Flak Catchers," describes a less exalted form of mutual hustle. When the Office of Economic Opportunity wanted to give money to ghetto leaders in 1968, how could they find the true leaders? Well, says a San Francisco character named Chaser, getting his boys set for a bureaucratic meeting,

> Y'all wear your *ghetto rags*. . . . You wear your *combat* fatigues and your leather *pieces* and your shades. . . . You go down with your hair *stickin' out* . . . and *sittin' up!* Lookin' wild! I want to see you down there looking like a bunch of *wild niggers!* . . . He'll try to get you to agree with him. He'll say "Ain't that right?" and "You know what I mean?" and he wants you to say yes or nod your head . . . see. . . . It's part of his psychological jiveass. But you don't say nothing. You just glare . . . Then some of the other brothers will get up on that stage behind him, like there's no more room or like they just gathering around. Then you brothers up there behind him, you start letting him have it. . . . He starts thinking, "Oh, good God! Those bad cats are in front of me, they all *around* me, they *behind* me. I'm *surrounded.*" That shakes 'em up.

Mau-mauing was a ghetto term for what the press called "confrontation"; flak catchers, the Hush Puppy civil service functionaries begging for symbolic castration so they could know who the real *bad* boys were and could ladle the funds out to them. Wolfe estimates hundreds of militant confrontations in San Francisco, thousands in the nation. He runs through a few of these, and incidentally performs a stunning analysis of the poverty–money scene in these innocent States.

In response to these fleeting joys, one reviewer after another finds Wolfe insufficiently committed to justice and humanity. Why, asks the *Times* anxiously, doesn't he suggest what to do about racism? *New Republic* sort of approves, but

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still feels he needs more "sense of ethical alternative." And *New York Review of Books,* slamming "Radical Chic," gets into a terrific sweat over the noble motives of the Bernsteins and their guests, the dignity of the Panthers, and the nastiness of Tom Wolfe, who is a voyeur, and makes fun of people's Jewish accents, and is no better than Spiro Agnew, and should have signed a check like a decent human being instead of insulting his hostess by writing such a mean story!

I hope Wolfe enjoyed that review. It should have felt like digging a hole and having real heffalumps fall in. But even benign reviewers mostly make sure to display their own Serious Concern about the issues of poverty and racism. In brief, everybody still wants to bark up the tree of Good and Evil — and so the message is missed.

What message? William Blake needled humanitarianism in eighteenth–century England, "Pity would be no more/ If we did not make somebody poor,/ And Mercy no more could be,/ If all were as happy as we." In the August 1971 issue of *Social Policy,* M.I.T. sociologist Herbert Gans outlines a theory of the social functions of poverty. Poor people, he observes, do useful things for others. They create automatic status and self–respect for the non-poor. They offer votes to liberal politicians and a handy scapegoat for conservatives. More interestingly, they provide work for armies of penologists, criminologists, social workers, public health officials, OEO paraprofessionals and so on — all those people who are supposed to be "helping" the poor and who would lose their reason for existence if the poor were ever actually helped — and of course they provide an object for the benevolence of the wealthy, a sacred cause for radical intellectuals and a lifejuice culture exploitable by the arts. What would we do without them?

This dovetails nicely into *Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers,* which suggests, similarly, that good intentions, high motivations and serious concern about social evils and "ethical alternatives" — whether we are chic like the Bernstein gang or nonchic like the lowly flak catchers — are a charming form of self-delusion. We are pleased to suppose that the political process of the nation is an important matter. Wolfe thinks it's a joke. The present book should probably be read alongside his earlier work, the LSD epic of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters called *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (which is not only the best thing available on the counterculture, but maybe the most exciting treatment of the American Dream since *The Great Gatsby*). Stylistically, *The Acid Test* is every kind of amazing indescribable. But here the author is not merely bored or

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amused. He is captivated by that *other* revolution: it's amoral, apolitical, carried on in a wilder high style than anything on Park Avenue, and cuts the heart out of our comfortable categories of right and wrong more than any existing political radicalism, black or otherwise. If you are a hard man to impress, here was *"quelque chose de nouveau,"* as Baudelaire says. After the *Acid Test,* one can see why the games played by socialites and Panthers, Mau-mauers and civil servants, might seem merely entertaining.

Alicia Ostriker

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LETTERS

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sirs:

Nearly every statement William Phillips makes (PR No. 1, 1971, pp. 9-10) about my article in last November's *Commentary* is patently false, as even a cursory reading of the article would reveal. Phillips certainly exemplifies his own complaints about the low "level of discussion and debate." To itemize:

I was not "ostensibly presenting a capsule history of New York intellectual life," although I referred favorably to three such efforts — by Podhoretz, Epstein and Howe — but at most a "capsule history" of *The New York Review of Books*. The title of the article, after all, was "The Case of *The New York Review*."

I did not accuse PR of "deviating" from any "political norm," merely of printing Jack Newfield and Nat Hentoff. The context made clear that my objection was to the intellectual caliber of these worthies rather than to their politics.

When Phillips writes that my "political norm . . . turns out to be right of center," one can only wonder just where he locates the center. Perhaps here too he exemplifies a tendency he himself deplores, that of mistaking the "fringe" for the center. Presumably, he considers *The New York Review* writers I criticized, such as Chomsky, Friedenberg, Kempton as centrists. A bit sectarian that, surely. I guess PR hasn't yet overcome the "arrogant intellectual parochialism" I said it possessed back in the forties, for I should have supposed that the center in American politics was where figures like Humphrey or Muskie stood. Phillips also ignores my criticism that some *New York Review* writers, while marching under the banners of the left, actually draw heavily on conservative and right-wing arguments in assailing American life and democracy.

Since the bulk of my article was devoted to detailed criticism of particular *New York Review* articles and writers, always listed and named, I fail to see how I can be said to have "ignor[ed] the differences between diverse peoples and positions." I neither discussed nor made "a hasty disposal" of *any* literary questions, but merely reported that most *New York Review* critics, and specifically Phillips's old *confrère* Philip Rahv, were unsympathetic to the current "new sensibility" in the arts. Nowhere did I suggest that "all forms of radicalism amount to intellectual betrayal." My objections were restricted to the most publicized contemporary forms of *soi-disant* radicalism.

My major concern in the article was with the state of the academic and intellectual community rather than "the state of the country." I was, after all, writing in a journal produced, like PR, largely by and for that community and which, unhappily, does not reach "backward and provincial opinion throughout the country." But does Phillips perhaps think that complaints about "the state of the country" are confined to journals like PR? Has he looked at *Life* lately or the CBS News? "The state of the country" may be "presumably what the left is responding to" (why the doubt?) but the New Left (and I insist on the upper case and the

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qualifying adjective) has been around long enough to have become part of that state. May it not also have become, as that other fellow said, part of the problem rather than part of the solution and thus deserve examination in its own right? Phillips himself seems to think so in some of his moods.

Nowhere in the article did I express even the shadow of a "belief that the left is the main threat." Threat to *what*, anyway? American liberties, intellectual discourse, the status quo? I assume Phillips meant the first of these. Both in my article and in my rejoinder to critics in a later *Commentary* I argued that the wilder tactics of the New Left were dangerous because they risked arousing similar tactics by the right which were far more likely to threaten the liberties of all of us and especially those groups the New Left claims to represent. However, in the universities New Left radicalism, "puny" though it may be in the country as a whole, *has* in the past few years far more than the right displayed "contempt for intellectual discourse" and threatened the academic freedom and sometimes the physical safety of members of the university. Phillips knows this as well as I do, probably better since his campus has suffered more turmoil than mine. I charged *The New York Review* with ignoring these threats in their highly selective coverage of the universities. . . .

[M]aybe what really irritated him about my article was my stress on the continuity between the excesses of the New Left today and the obsessive anti-Communism of intellectuals like himself in the fifties who so muted or abandoned their left traditions that radicalism virtually disappeared, permitting the young rebels of the sixties to delude themselves that, to adapt one of Phillips's own phrases, history began when they discovered politics. Phillips, I'm sure, would agree with Rahv's response to Irving Howe that all this "was a long time ago and in another country, and besides the wench is dead" (the wench's name was Djugashvili) in preference to my insistence on the links between the anti-Communism and American celebration of the fifties and the radical inanities of today over which he moans so much.

I'm happy, though, to be able to agree entirely with his high praise for Hannah Arendt.

Dennis H. Wrong

AMERICA

Sirs:

I have considered and reconsidered the rebuttals offered by Messrs. Harrington and Schlesinger. Neither scribble impresses nor persuades me on any major point. I am instead struck by the plentitude of evasion, special pleading, false syllogisms, and overblown rhetoric. I rest my case with the reader who works his way through my books, and my reply to their initial criticisms.

William Appleman Williams

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WHODUNIT?

Sirs:

John Hollander's poem, "Autumn, 1970," on page 47 of PR No. 1, 1971, has some nice things in it and it is easy to understand your publishing it. What is not so easy to understand is the failure of you or Mr. Hollander to mention that it is a rendering, and I fear a rather vapid one, of Hölderlin's magnificent "Hälfte des Lebens." Perhaps you erred in transcribing the numbers — certainly "Autumn, 1790" would be closer to the mark. I sincerely trust that by now you have received enough letters with essentially this content that you will have prepared a multigraphed reply — I mean, it is one of the most famous poems in the German language and not somehow up for grabs.

J. S. Winkler

Mr. Hollander replies:

You alone have triumphed in the apprehension of the obvious, and I leave you to conclude either a) that you have nevertheless corrected the misapprehensions of the editors of *Partisan Review* who, poor unfortunates, were deceived into printing what they sincerely believed was original work, and, in addition, disclosed my seedy plagiarism (at the end of my creative tether, I am forced to cull goodies from the greats and market them in my own vapid versions, hoping that there will be no Winklers to find me out — alas!); *or* b) that the text is so canonical that an "after H." might have sounded pedantic, also given the title which invoked the Hölderlin Bicentennial, and the deliberate inversions of image operating out of a literalizing mistranslation ("the land in the lake"), and the additional theft from Caspar David Friedrich of the paired figures seen from behind which should also have to be acknowledged. All of which would drown my little dedicatory poem in a pool of scholia.

But I fear from the tone of your letter that you have already decided, and that you must continue your efforts on behalf of the plundered dead with redoubled vigor. Poor Ronsard! rifled by Yeats in "When you are old and grey and full of sleep," he will only be avenged by the untiring Winkler; Catullus's powdered bones stirred with chagrin when "Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus" was baldly co-opted, not once, but twice within a decade by Ben Jonson ("Come, my Celia") and Thomas Campion ("My sweetest Lesbia, let us live and love") — but there was no Jacobean Winkler to expose their shoddy fraud; neither would soothing the petulance of the traduced shade of Petrarch (starting with the crude Wyatt and the smoother and perhaps thereby viler Surrey, and continuing through the turn of the next century) keep you out of work. On to it, Winkler! Abandon all other projects: neither that naked hussy, Truth, nor the sightless Justice will tolerate a rival: neither unhastening Prudence; nor the softie, Humor; nor Imagination (bounteous but distant) nor even a strange Protean figure of Acquaintance with Literature who haunts the purlieus of the library stacks, has been much in evidence. But work on, Mr. Winkler, lest one of them manage to divert your energies from their task.

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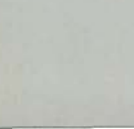

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